

“Full of Experiments and Reforms”:
Bloomsbury’s Literature and Economics

by

Alice Davis Keane

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor John A. Whittier-Ferguson, Chair
Professor Gregg D. Crane
Professor Geoff Eley
Professor Alan M. Wald
Associate Professor Andrea P. Zemgulys

“We were full of experiments and reforms [...] Everything was going to be new, everything was going to be different. Everything was on trial.”

-- Virginia Woolf, “Old Bloomsbury” (1922)

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Introduction: Modeling Modernism in Bloomsbury

Much of Bloomsbury's fiction takes economics as a central concern – for example, Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* and *The Years*, as well as E. M. Forster's *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, and Leonard Woolf's early anti-imperialist novel *The Village in the Jungle*. This interest in economics is even more characteristic of Bloomsbury's essays and polemics, including Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. Mutually influencing each other in the multidisciplinary context of Bloomsbury, Keynes and Virginia Woolf – as well as Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster – all, in varying ways, conceive of economic goals not as ends in themselves but as a basis for the production of art and the achievement of the good life. They work toward these aims by using a method of inquiry that, because it acknowledges uncertainty, is experimental and iterative,¹ yet more accurate in representing the empirical conditions of the “real world” than overly reductionist neoclassical economic precision can yield.

My dissertation hypothesizes that, for Bloomsbury, Keynesian economics and modernist literature both foreground a “linguistic turn” toward vagueness, and both privilege a substantive concept that is philosophical and, to some degree, political: we might characterize it in terms of the Cambridge philosopher G.E. Moore's ethical analysis of value in the context of the good life. Intellectual history scholars have established a linkage

¹ Iterative development, which modifies and adjusts the versions of a project over time, taking advantage of empirical observation to correct errors and respond to changing circumstances, conjures both a mathematical process and a literary one.

between Keynesian macroeconomics and Cambridge philosophy. This dissertation project argues for a further linkage, through language and indeterminacy in the context of modernism, among those two disciplines and Bloomsbury's literature.

Critics have occasionally addressed Bloomsbury's literature and economics, but their exploration has thus far been limited. For example, Alex Zwerdling historicizes Woolf's writings, emphasizing the importance of economic tropes in both her fiction and nonfiction. Jennifer Wicke discerns commonalities between Woolf and Keynes with respect to the modern market as an organizing sociocultural force. Alissa Karl, building upon Wicke's reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, examines that novel as "a theorization of consumer consciousness in its historical frames of empire and capital" (Karl 62). Michael Tratner has analyzed *Mrs. Dalloway* as a validation of consumer desire that can potentially be read in conjunction with Keynes's economic theories about deficit spending (Tratner 120). Kathryn Simpson has explored the intersection of gift and market economies in Woolf's *oeuvre*. In this dissertation, I argue for a linkage between Bloomsbury's philosophical influences and Keynes's and Woolf's cross-generic writings on the modern economy. From a historical and interdisciplinary perspective, I posit that Woolf's and Keynes's texts are mutually categorizable as "modern fictions," with a common capacity to instantiate political and cultural change.

For Bloomsbury, by the 1930s, the Edwardian-era line of philosophical influence exemplified by *Principia Ethica* (1903) expands from G. E. Moore's ethical foundation, which emphasizes love and the aesthetic contemplation of beauty as essential components of the good life, to reflect a late modernist turn paralleling Ludwig Wittgenstein's development of ordinary language philosophy. "Only let us understand what 'inexact' means," Wittgenstein aphorizes in *Philosophical Investigations*. "For it does not mean 'unusable'" (§88). Keynes, who

was instrumental in arranging Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929, emphasizes in the *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936) that over-formalized attempts at "mathematical' economics" are too often "as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependencies of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols" (297-98). Ultimately, Wittgenstein's linguistic insights prove more pragmatically "usable" than those of Cambridge's philosophical realists in modeling ways for Keynes to represent modern macroeconomic complexity and uncertainty.

The result is a new kind of modeling methodology. Epistemological modeling is a long-standing tradition of economics, one that has been characteristic throughout its development as a discipline. Economists from Adam Smith to John Maynard Keynes to the neoclassical Chicago School, as Jonathan Schlefer notes, "make simplified assumptions about the economic world we inhabit and construct imaginary economies -- in other words, models -- based on those assumptions" (25). Conventional, contemporary economic models may be either theoretical or empirical, but in either case they tend to be highly formalized and abstract. Accordingly, models are, in some sense, pragmatically necessary fictions.

The economist Tyler Cowen has suggested, conversely, that there are some complementarities between novels and models. But fiction can also convey "thick description," ambiguity, and complexity in ways that abstract models cannot (25). Literary techniques can be used to foreground affect, to draw empathy from the reader, and to craft fictional scenarios that allow for some play of intuition and implicit, even unarticulated knowledge, including around economic and political issues. Megan Quigley has claimed, in particular, that Woolf and other modernist authors "probe[] vagueness as the best way to examine psychological depth" (105).

As he develops the *General Theory*, Keynes moves from courting what he describes as a kind of “grey” and “fuzzy” indeterminacy (*Keynes’s Lectures* 100-101), deliberately welcoming open dialogue and debate from others in his field, to crafting a mature and more concretely realized – but never fully fixed – empirical and theoretical model of the modern macroeconomy. Keynes’s non-absolutist approach in the *General Theory* is also consistent with the kind of small scale “experiments” that he advocates in his more utopian, even fanciful, 1930 essay, “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren,” and Virginia Woolf repeatedly privileges this kind of modest, empirical, experimental method as well.

From a historicist and cultural studies perspective, I argue that Forster’s and Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s multifaceted representations of economics in prose are analogous to a “fuzzy,” modernist and non-absolutist Wittgensteinian and Keynesian linguistic and economic model – one that is impossible to construct with any sense of finality or resolution. Bloomsbury’s thinkers maintain the capacity to shift modes, from something akin to Keynes’s “grey, fuzzy” initial phase of modeling to a more precise and concrete kind of calculation or accounting, and back, whichever works best in a given economic scenario – or fictional scene. Both techniques remain available, avoiding extremes of either analytical abstraction that is no longer reasonably reflective of messy empirical reality, or utopian impracticality, because both are in play, in an atmosphere of experiment, change and critical debate. Such a pragmatic valuing of openness to debate is similar to what Christine Froula has characterized as the *sensus communis* of Bloomsbury (Froula 3). What I describe as the “double lens” of Bloomsbury’s modeling methodology, in economics and in language, is a new way to analyze and better understand the process that enables the development of Bloomsbury’s economic, literary and cultural interventions.

I argue that Bloomsbury's epistemological approach to modeling in the 1930s is also foreshadowed by Keynes's carefully measured appreciation of Freud's modernist psychoanalytic narratives in the 1920s. A recognition of not only epistemological uncertainty and ontological vagueness, but also the role played by human irrationality, a close analogue to "animal spirits," is central to Keynes's (and Virginia Woolf's) varying and somewhat equivocal reception of Freud. Indeed, Keynes's pseudonymous commentary in *The Nation and Athenaeum* on the Hogarth Press's translations of Freud suggests significant parallels between Freud's psychoanalytic innovations and aspects of Bloomsbury's modeling method and its limitations.

Reading Keynes (himself an effective and elegant polemicist) can, I argue, help us to better understand Bloomsbury's writers, including the Woolfs and Forster, and vice versa. The key inflections of Keynes's economic theory are not wholly bounded by the discipline of economics – rather, they become literary and cultural as Keynes counters traditional free market assumptions, which presume that rational actors in the marketplace seek to maximize utility for themselves in purely monetary terms. If Keynes weighs in on his conception of what the good life is, and if that conception is shared in large part by Forster, Virginia Woolf, or Leonard Woolf, this suggests that cultural historians or literary critics *have* to understand Keynes in order to understand Bloomsbury's paradigm of the good life. This kind of critical analysis can only be accomplished from such an interdisciplinary perspective, especially since Bloomsbury itself, at least implicitly, understood it this way.

Chapter One, analyzing the rhetorical stance of Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* and arguing for its affinities with the genre of the Bloomsbury polemic, considers how Keynes's interdisciplinary grounding in mathematics and philosophy contributed to his recognition of the irreducible impact of uncertainty in probabilistic, and

later in economic, decisionmaking. I examine the implications of economic complexity and linguistic vagueness in the *General Theory*. Vagueness and the acknowledgment of uncertainty are indispensable tools not only for Bloomsbury's novelists, but they are fundamental to Keynes's attempts at economic modeling. Furthermore, analyzing Keynes's utopian essay, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," I demonstrate that this text both reveals Keynes as a "Bloomsbury modernist"² in interesting ways and that it can also be shown to link his economic and policy aims, to a significant degree, with the earlier utopian experiments of William Morris and John Ruskin – themselves antecedents of Bloomsbury and influences, to varying degrees, on Forster and the Woolfs.

Chapter Two explores why and to what effect, as Virginia Woolf reflects upon the interplay of economics and literature, she repeatedly foregrounds contradiction, complexity and linguistic vagueness. I assert that Woolf's insistence upon acknowledging complexity constitutes, if sometimes paradoxically, useful and realistic exploration, mostly avoiding the fixing and repetition of often-erroneous certainty regarding questions of empirical value about what is necessary to achieve a fully engaged and sustainable artistic life. Woolf experiments with possibilities, some pragmatic and some impossibly utopian, to optimize her "model" for the woman artist of her own class in particular, but also, to some degree and with varying success, for both genders and all classes and "professions" in a changing 20th century England.

Chapter Three addresses E. M. Forster's literature and liberalism in the context of Keynesian economics, focusing on *Howards End*, *A Passage to India*, and selected Forster

² Critics such as Tim Armstrong have noted that the concept of "modernism" is "characterized by a series of seeming contradictions" (5). Useful definitions of "modernism" in a literary context, for example, are not necessarily bounded by the criterion of formal innovation (which would clearly encompass Woolf's *oeuvre*, but far less so, that of E.M. Forster). For Armstrong, "attempting to discriminate different modernisms – for example the classical 'objectivity' and authoritarian politics celebrated by Wyndham Lewis versus the interiority and democratic merging he attacked in Bergson, Woolf, Joyce and others" (5) can be useful, but he cautions that a "dialectical" approach to such categorization is essential (5).

essays and radio broadcasts. Margaret Schlegel's exhortation in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) to "Only connect!" too easily elides the debt owing when the wealth of Empire furnishes the Chelsea rooms of Schlegels and Wilcoxes. *Howards End* is full of such modernist "duplicities," as Fredric Jameson has emphasized (52). Building upon Jameson's insights, Chapter Three offers a comparative reading of Keynes and Forster, foregrounding common rhetorical and philosophical approaches to economic valuation and "modeling" – a quarter-century apart, in *Howards End* and *The General Theory* – on the part of these two Bloomsbury liberals. Reading *A Passage to India* (1924) through the lens of economic anthropology and linguistic indeterminacy reveals Forster's partial yet significant shift after *Howards End* toward recognition of a political and ethical debt that is literally unforgivable. From the viewpoint of Bloomsbury's iterative, empirical modeling methodology, which makes self-reflexive use of uncertainty and vagueness to better approximate a pragmatic understanding of the economic and sociocultural contingencies of the real world and how they might be changed, I argue for a reading that seeks to more fully explicate the progression in Forster's positioning with respect to imperialism between these two works.

Chapter Four examines Keynes's successive revisitings of German reparations in collaboration with his democratic Weimar counterparts in the 1920s. Keynes has usually been figured as "prescient" about the historical causation of World War Two, thanks to his 1919 polemic, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. A counterargument, raised initially by Etienne Mantoux and revived by Margaret MacMillan, figures Keynes as a dupe of Germany. I argue that both of these historical perspectives, whether valorizing or excoriating Keynes, largely ignore his subsequent, iterative revisiting of the Treaty of Versailles and its aftermath over the course of fourteen years, and the role that Keynes's embeddedness in Bloomsbury's print culture played in the furthering critical discourse around reparations policy in Germany,

as well as in Britain and the United States. As historian Peter Gay phrases it, in Weimar, “song was substituted for thought” (69). Conversely, the assumption that rationality should be foregrounded in political discourse was a strongly held value for Bloomsbury between the wars. Situating *The Nation and Athenaeum* in the context of Bloomsbury’s networks of print culture, Chapter Four concludes that this assumption became – temporarily, yet for too long – a premise that obscured Keynes’s assessment of rhetorical risks as he engaged in the circulation of ideas through publication networks in the late Weimar Republic.

Chapter Five explores how Leonard Woolf’s method of inquiry into the subject of British imperialism – from his early Sinhalese texts to his extensive body of Fabian socialist and anti-imperialist political prose and his late reflections upon Ceylon in *Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904 to 1911* (1961) – reflects an epistemological and rhetorical acknowledgment of uncertainty that, notwithstanding Woolf’s tendency toward formal didacticism, he holds in common with other key members of Bloomsbury. In *Diaries in Ceylon: 1908-1911*, Leonard Woolf records his ethically disquieting activities as a colonial administrator. Two years later, Woolf reframes material from these official diaries as a socioeconomic case study in novel form. In *The Village in the Jungle* (1913), the economic and regulatory structures of British imperialism circumscribe Sinhalese culture in all respects, leading to catastrophe. I read these two texts together as an early attempt, by a core member of “Old Bloomsbury,” at modeling in prose a critique of economic imperialism in the British Commonwealth. Leonard Woolf’s first novel, despite and sometimes because of its formal and aesthetic flaws, can also be read as his first attempt at an anti-imperialist polemic. Fictionalizing his own experiences as a colonialist functionary and narrating much of the novel from a Sinhalese point of view, Woolf depicts British colonialism as an economic model that can no longer be sustained. Chapter Five concludes that, insofar as version

theory implies a non-absolutist method, it is congruent with the iterative epistemology that is foundational to the Bloomsbury model.

“That the artist is interested in politics needs no saying,” Virginia Woolf acknowledges in her late essay (“The Artist and Politics” 230). Under conditions of imminent peril, that interest must extend to overt involvement; the artist “is forced to take part in politics” (232). Woolf’s literary work in the 1930s, as exemplified by the genetic development and rhetorical strategies of *The Pargiters* and its daughter narratives, constitutes radical political, economic and sociocultural advocacy, and perhaps a remaking of Bloomsbury’s own “avant-garde.” Contemporaneously, Keynes’s efforts to influence Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s economic policymaking in the 1930s and 1940s suggest that he was determined to shape, albeit with some serious pragmatic constraints given his political and cultural ties to a “shrinking island,” the course of not only English but Anglo-American economic policy. Woolf was reclaimed by literary scholars in the late 1970s, just as Keynes was being ushered into relative obsolescence by neoliberal economists. But, from the 1940s through the 1970s, Bloomsbury’s strongest sociocultural influence on the United States was mediated not through the narratives of Virginia Woolf, but those of her fellow Bloomsbury intellectual, John Maynard Keynes. Recovering epistemological continuities between Keynes and Woolf offers the potential for a new reading of Bloomsbury’s modernist impact on Anglo-American cultural, economic and sociopolitical history.

Chapter One

Economic Complexity and Linguistic Vagueness:

Keynes as a Bloomsbury Modernist

Mutually influencing each other in the multidisciplinary context of Bloomsbury, John Maynard Keynes and Virginia Woolf – as well as Leonard Woolf and E. M. Forster – all, in varying ways, conceive of economic goals not as ends in themselves but as a basis for the production of art and the achievement of the good life. They work toward these aims by using a method of inquiry that, because it acknowledges uncertainty, is experimental and iterative, yet paradoxically more accurate in representing the empirical conditions of the “real world” than overly reductionist neoclassical precision can yield. Scholars of intellectual history have established a convincing linkage between Keynesian macroeconomics and Cambridge philosophy, tracing influences on Keynes from G.E. Moore to Ludwig Wittgenstein.¹ I argue for a further linkage among these two disciplines and Bloomsbury’s literature.

As Keynes develops *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), he moves from courting what he calls a kind of “grey” and “fuzzy” indeterminacy (*Keynes’s Lectures* 100-101), deliberately welcoming open dialogue and debate from others in his field,

¹ On Keynes’s philosophical influences and the development of the *General Theory*, see in particular John Davis, *Keynes’s Philosophical Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

to crafting a mature and more concretely realized – but never fully fixed – empirical and theoretical model of the modern macroeconomy. Keynes’s non-absolutist approach in the *General Theory* is also consistent with the kind of gradual, small scale “experiments” that he advocates in his more utopian, even fanciful, 1930 essay, “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren,” and the Woolfs and Forster repeatedly privilege this kind of modest, empirical, experimental method as well.

Although it has potential drawbacks, especially for those who are rightly impatient for much-needed socioeconomic change, one real benefit of employing such a method is that some kinds of errors have a greater chance of becoming (to borrow a Joycean phrase) portals of discovery, and others may more easily be mitigated, allowing for course correction before significant negative consequences ensue. Such a pragmatic valuing of openness to debate is similar to what Christine Froula has characterized as the *sensus communis* of Bloomsbury (3). This “double lens” of Bloomsbury’s modeling methodology, in economics and in language, is a useful way to characterize the process that enables the development of Keynes’s, the Woolfs’ and Forster’s interventions and, given its inherently course-correcting potential in response to changing empirical evidence, helps them to avoid significant or persistent errors, both of which contribute in new ways toward explaining Bloomsbury’s ongoing and considerable cultural influence.

By setting the complexities of modern economics and of the modern subject into conversation, Bloomsbury seeks to explicate them as part of a culturally and philosophically coherent attempt, albeit never a monolithic one, at understanding and representing the conditions of modern life. This chapter will explore how Keynes’s approach to economic theory and policy developed in response to historical crises and how it might best be situated in the context of Bloomsbury’s interdisciplinary modernism. Part I of this chapter considers

how Keynes's interdisciplinary grounding in mathematics and philosophy contributed to his recognition of the irreducible impact of uncertainty in probabilistic, and later in economic, decisionmaking. Part II explores potential modernist linkages between Keynes and Freud in the context of Keynes's theorizing about irrationality and "animal spirits" in *The General Theory*. Part III examines the implications of economic complexity and linguistic vagueness in *The General Theory*. Part IV analyzes Keynes's utopian essay, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," which reveals Keynes as a "Bloomsbury modernist" and can also be shown to link his economic and policy aims, to a significant degree, with the earlier utopian experiments of William Morris and John Ruskin. Part V analyzes the rhetorical stance of *The General Theory*, arguing for its affinities with the genre of the Bloomsbury polemic.

I. Keynes on Uncertainty and Irrationality: From *A Treatise on Probability* to *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*

Keynes's initial studies as an undergraduate at Cambridge were in mathematics (Skidelsky, Vol. I, 112-15), but he also pursued early interests in philosophy, attending G.E. Moore's lectures on ethics in his first year (113). In 1905, he began to study with the prominent classical economist, Alfred Marshall (162). Keynes subsequently took the Civil Service Examination and his scores qualified him for a post in the British government's India Office (166-67; 175). While holding the India Office position, he drafted a fellowship dissertation in probability.

As early as 1905, Keynes had begun working on probability (Moggridge 163), and a revised version of his dissertation won him an academic position at King's College in 1909. A subsequent version was published in 1921 as *A Treatise on Probability*. Keynes brought his interdisciplinary background in philosophy and mathematics to his work on probability; his

work on probability, in turn, has been identified by economic historians as pivotal to the development of his mature economic theory. Keynes initially approached his project on probability with Edwardian-era faith in the power of rational analysis and calculation: “Keynes tried to improve on Moore by detaching the question of what we ought to do from conventional morality, and linking it instead to individual judgment of probabilities attaching to different courses of action” (Skidelsky, Vol. II xviii). However, the philosophical stumbling block to this approach was identical to that in Moore’s *Principia Ethica* itself, since both “rest on intuition” (xviii), a method that “breaks down when it becomes apparent that people’s intuitions of goodness and right conduct differ...” (xviii)

There is some disagreement among scholars as to exactly when Keynes’s investigation of probability led him to reassess the applicability of Moore’s views to this area of inquiry. Donald Moggridge dates some change as early as Keynes’s undergraduate debates with the Apostles and his drafting of the 1907 version of the King’s College fellowship dissertation (163-64). There is also disagreement as to whether Keynes’s views on probability continued to shift after he published *A Treatise on Probability* in 1921.² In particular, a version of the “discontinuity thesis,” advocated by Robert Skidelsky and Donald Gillies, holds that Cambridge pragmatist philosopher Frank Ramsey dealt a decisive blow to Keynes’s Mooreist assumptions about probability when, in 1925, he read a paper on “Truth and Probability” to the Moral Sciences Club. Keynes had recognized the existence of uncertainty in *A Treatise on Probability*. Indeed, Skidelsky traces this element of the Treatise “all the way back to a paper

² Donald Gillies summarizes the latter controversy:

One point of view is the *continuity thesis*, that Keynes held much the same view of probability throughout his life. This thesis is advocated by (among others) Lawson (1985), Carabelli (1988) and O’Donnell (1989). Opposed to this is the *discontinuity thesis*, that Keynes changed his views on the interpretation of probability significantly between 1921 and 1936. This thesis is advocated by Bateman (1987, 1996) and Davis (1994).” (Gillies, “Keynes and Probability,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Keynes* 204).

he read to the Apostles in 1904 when...he had attacked G. E. Moore's theory of how people ought to behave in the face of uncertainty" (Skidelsky, Vol. II 56). But he still assumed that probability is a rational relation. This was Edwardian-era Cambridge philosophy, and in view of Wittgenstein's critique, it was already defunct (although Keynes was still using it in the 1921 *Treatise*).³

Ramsey's 1925 paper criticizes Keynes's fundamental assumption that objective relations of probability between pairs of propositions existed and could be perceived. Declared Ramsey: "I do not perceive them, and if I am to be persuaded that they exist it must be by argument; moreover I shrewdly suspect that others do not perceive them either, because they are able to come to so very little agreement..." (Ramsey 161). As Skidelsky characterizes the event: "After an hour or so of beautiful demolition work little of the baroque edifice of the *Treatise* was left standing" (Skidelsky, Vol. II 70). Moreover, it was Wittgenstein, not yet returned to Cambridge, who had constructed the modernist philosophical wrecking equipment that Ramsey wielded: "Wittgenstein was the major figure in the downfall of Keynes's theory..." (Skidelsky, Vol. II 69).

Keynes did not publish work in the field of probability after 1921, and his only written response to Ramsey's critique followed the philosopher's death in 1930. Keynes wrote in 1933, but also hedged his concessions:

Ramsey argues, as against the view which I had put forward, that probability is concerned not with objective relations between propositions but (in some sense) with degrees of belief, and he succeeds in showing that the calculus of probabilities simply amounts to a set of rules for ensuring

³ Skidelsky explains: "...the *Treatise* was a pre-war book, reflecting the way pre-war Cambridge did its philosophy. Its distinctive philosophical ingredients are Rationalism – the appeal to reason rather than observation as the source of knowledge – and Platonism or Realism – the doctrine that ideas are independent objects, Platonic Forms, capable of being perceived by the mind. Thus probability is for Keynes a 'real objective' relation we 'cognise', just as, for G. E. Moore, 'good' was a non-material property of things, whose presence we 'intuit'. This way of doing philosophy was old-fashioned by the 1920s. Wittgenstein asked, 'Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted?'" (Skidelsky, Vol II 56; see also 68-73)

that the system of degrees of belief which we hold shall be a *consistent* system. Thus the calculus of probabilities belongs to formal logic. But the basis of our degrees of belief – or the *a priori* probabilities, as they used to be called – is part of our human outfit, perhaps given us merely by natural selection, analogous to our perceptions and our memories rather than to formal logic. So far I yield to Ramsey – I think he is right. But in attempting to distinguish ‘rational’ degrees of belief from belief in general he was not yet, I think, quite successful. (Keynes, *Essays in Biography*, *CW* X 338-39).

Some critics, given this context, have downplayed the extent of Keynes’s philosophical yielding to Ramsey. But it would seem that Skidelsky and Gillies argue the point most convincingly. Skidelsky does acknowledge the limitations of his conclusions regarding the influence of modern developments on Keynes; it is especially problematic that, although “Keynes spent many hours talking and arguing with Wittgenstein on the latter’s return to Cambridge in 1929 [...] no trace of these conversations has survived” (Vol. II 72). Notwithstanding the limitation of missing archival evidence regarding those meetings in Cambridge, Keynes’s early, multidisciplinary work on probability and uncertainty, followed by his philosophical discussions with Wittgenstein, were essential precursors to his later development of the Bloomsbury “modeling” method. Uncertainty, irrationality and vagueness became, for Keynes, foundational modernist concepts well before he applied them in crafting the *General Theory*.

John Coates has also examined Keynes’s changing philosophy in the course of his work on probability, arguing for Keynes’s later embrace of Wittgensteinian “vagueness.” He finds, in the *Treatise on Probability*, that “Keynes hoped to blend the logical methods of Russell with both Moore’s defense of common sense and his non-utilitarian brand of ethics.”

(Coates 63) This attempt gave rise to difficulties.⁴ Keynes had “serious reservations about

⁴ Coates cites the following aside in the *Treatise on Probability*:

Russell's form of analysis" (Coates 76), and in the *Treatise on Probability*, "[t]his showed itself in Keynes's fundamental reservations about (1) the assumption that reductive symbolic analyses are more precise, or less prone to ambiguity, than everyday language; (2) the possibility of specifying sense data without interpretation; and (3) the possibility of reducing complex entities to the level of simples." (76). Subsequently, observes Coates, in the 1930s, Keynes "sounds increasingly Wittgensteinian in his views on language" (76-77); both he and Wittgenstein "came to believe that the property of vagueness challenged much of analysis and phenomenology" (77).

Keynes would press the implications of uncertainty in the 1930s toward the formulation of a new macroeconomic theory. The historical context is crucial in tracing the development of Keynes's views on uncertainty and its implications for economic decision-making. Skidelsky observes: "What started Keynes on the road to the Keynesian Revolution was the incomplete British recovery from the depression of 1920 to 1922." (Vol II 130). World War One had been a much more devastating catastrophe for Britain than for the United States, and given Britain's ruinous expenses in funding the war, the 1920s were economically more difficult in Britain than across the Atlantic. Focusing on the British experience of this decade, Richard Overby notes a prevailing "belief that capitalism had reached the limit of what it could usefully do and was now in some form of decay or decline, and that this crisis was a necessary and inevitable consequence of the way capitalism operated." (66) There was also, Overby emphasizes, persistent fear in Britain "that the system in its death throes might provoke a terrible political backlash of fascistic dictatorship" (68).

The course which the history of thought has led Logic to follow has encouraged the view that doubtful arguments are not within its scope. But in the actual exercise of reason we do not wait on certainty, or deem it irrational to depend on a doubtful argument. If logic investigates the general principles of valid thought, the study of arguments, to which it is rational to attach *some* weight, is as much a part of it as the study of those which are demonstrative. (Keynes, *A Treatise on Probability. Collected Works*, vol. 8, p. 3)

In 1919, Keynes's polemic against the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), had brought him to public prominence. Startling for both its modernist tone and its foreshadowing of substantive elements that Keynes was to develop further in his later work, Chapter I of this text emphasizes "the intensely unusual, unstable, complicated, unreliable, temporary nature" of Western Europe's prewar economic stability. (3) Keynes situates the polemic in his own immediate cultural context as well as the aftermath of historical crisis: "this book has been written by one who, though an Englishman, feels himself a European also." (8) Moreover, examining the position of "Europe before the War," he posits that political stability under circumstances of pre-war economic inequality "depended on unstable psychological conditions, which it may be impossible to recreate." (21-22)⁵

Keynes foregrounds complexity, not certainty or absolutism, even as he argues against the foreseeable disaster of the Treaty: "in so complex a phenomenon the prognostics do not all point one way; and we may make the error of expecting consequences to follow too swiftly and too inevitably from what perhaps are not *all* the relevant causes." (252) Psychological context, an early hint of the nascent Keynesian trope of "animal spirits," cannot be ignored: "The blackness of the prospect itself leads us to doubt its accuracy; our imagination is dulled rather than stimulated by too woeful a narration, and our minds rebound from what is felt 'too bad to be true.'" (252) It is those same psychological and historical contexts that require the Treaty's overly stringent accounting of wartime damages

⁵ Freud was contemporaneously developing his psychoanalytic theories in the aftermath of World War One. Martin Harries, exploring Marx's and Keynes's use of Shakespearean references to the supernatural in his *Scare Quotes from Shakespeare: Marx, Keynes, and the Language of Reenchantment* (2000), discerns proto-Freudian elements in Keynes's rhetoric several years before Bloomsbury itself would translate Freud. In Chapter 3 of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, Keynes characterizes Woodrow Wilson's resistance to criticism of the treaty in terms that indicate his early conversancy with Freud: "to suggest to the President that the treaty was an abandonment of his professions was to touch on the raw of a Freudian complex" (34).

to be modified and made sustainable, for, Keynes predicts: “I do not believe that any of these tributes will continue to be paid, at the best, for more than a very few years. They do not square with human nature or agree with the spirit of the age.” (282) He concludes with a pragmatic call to recognize the likely triumph of vague and inchoate irrationality over rationalistic planning: “The events of the coming year will not be shaped by the deliberate acts of statesmen, but by the hidden currents, flowing continually beneath the surface of political history, of which no one can predict the outcome.” (296) Only by changing, shaping and educating public opinion “can we influence those hidden currents” – and thus Keynes dedicates his polemic “[t]o the formation of the general opinion of the future” (298).

Skidelsky notes that *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* “set Keynes’s course for the 1920s. As long as financial diplomacy dominated international relations, he would be in demand for comment, plans, counsel and consultancies” (Vol. II xxxiv). But both Skidelsky and Overy cast Keynes as much more a critic of flawed economic policies than a theoretical innovator in the 1920s: “His polemics of the 1920s were directed against the mistakes of the policymakers, not against the theories they held.” (Skidelsky, Vol. II 6; see also Overy 87). In Skidelsky’s view, this began to change in the mid-1920s: “It was not till Britain’s return to the gold standard in 1925 that Keynes started to think that mistaken policy was the result of mistaken theory.” (Vol. II 6).⁶

The groundwork was, nonetheless, being laid for Keynes’s later emphasis on uncertainty, irrationality and vagueness in his modeling of the *General Theory*. Here, I think we must look beyond economics and politics for Keynes’s nascent influences, and in particular to the interdisciplinary context of Bloomsbury. As discussed in Section II, Keynes not only read but reviewed pseudonymously the Hogarth Press’s translations of Freud in the 1920s

⁶ For a detailed historical account of Keynes’s development as a theorist, see Peter Clarke’s *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making, 1924-1936* (1988).

for *The Nation and Athenaeum*. He both praised and critiqued Freud's interventions in one rapidly developing social science, that of psychology, making observations about Freud's methodology that prefigure modernist elements of his own innovations in macroeconomic theory. Still, as Skidelsky observes, Keynes's own theoretical approach to economics "remained relatively conservative" until a few years after the 1929 stock market crash (Vol. II 6).

Skidelsky finds: "Putting together all the correspondence and argument it can be seen that the critical stages in refashioning the theory of the *Treatise* occurred in the early spring and summer of 1932, and that the key move was the shift of analysis in terms of prices to analysis in terms of income and expenditure" (Vol II 459). *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* was published in 1936. Perhaps its most famous characterization of the consequences of uncertainty appears in Chapter 12. Building upon his insights of the 1920s, Keynes writes vividly about the role of uncertainty and irrationality in economic decision-making. In contrast to traditional macroeconomic assumptions about "rational" economic behavior, he emphasizes the role of "animal spirits," which, conflating psychological, philosophical and literary concepts, he characterizes in distinctly non-rational terms:

Even apart from the instability due to speculation, there is the instability due to the characteristic of human nature that a large proportion of our positive activities depend on spontaneous optimism rather than mathematical expectations, whether moral or hedonistic or economic. Most, probably, of our decisions to do something positive, the full consequences of which will be drawn out over many days to come, can only be taken as the result of animal spirits - a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities. (161-62)

For Skidelsky: “Chapter 12 is the best account in the economic literature of the psychology of panics...” (Vol II 556). Moreover, observing recently that “If one idea had to be picked out as central to *The General Theory*, it is the idea of uncertainty” (Posner 288), jurist and law and economics theorist Richard A. Posner draws a parallel between Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s exhortation during his first inaugural address, in March 1933, that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance” and Keynes’s emphasis on “animal spirits” and their importance as a starting point for economic action in the *General Theory* (Posner 288).

Indeed, this foundational aspect of the *General Theory* could be promoted by Keynesians on the basis of a real-world policy outcome: the restoration of confidence upon Roosevelt’s abandonment of the gold standard impacted the economy for the better as soon as “animal spirits” improved – and this happened *before* the policy change itself could be implemented.⁷ Keynes’s persistent efforts to influence Roosevelt’s economic policymaking in the 1930s and 1940s also provide some counterpoint to Jed Esty’s observation that the *General Theory* “replicates in economic terms the recuperation of social totality that [Keynes’s] literary contemporaries began to imagine in cultural terms” (20).⁸ Esty finds that, like many

⁷ As Posner describes the backdrop to, and consequences of, this early Rooseveltian “experiment”:

...in the three and a half years of depression during which Hoover was president, confidence drained out of the economy. The depression touched bottom at the end of his term and turned around within weeks of Roosevelt’s inauguration. Hoover’s adherence to the gold standard, and his determination to keep government small (so no Keynesian stimulus) and raise taxes to try to balance the budget, created a rational expectation of continued economic contraction, dampening the economy’s animal spirits. Roosevelt’s decision, made promptly upon his taking office, to go off the gold standard, push up prices (in order to end deflation), and engage in massive (for the time) deficit spending created an expectation of economic recovery. This expectation had positive effects on the economy even before the new policies could take effect. Roosevelt restored confidence, which Hoover had killed, and renewed confidence restarted the economic engine. (Posner 2010, 327, citing Gauti Eggertsson, “Great Expectations and the End of the Depression,” 98 *American Economic Review* 1476 (2008)).

⁸ Here, Esty cites as examples Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* and T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* (Esty 20).

British literary figures of the 1930s, Keynes in the *General Theory* seeks “to recover a usable core of English national culture from the derelict body of British imperialism” (Esty 167). Innovative and compelling as this argument is, Keynes’s public and private letters to Roosevelt and his travels to Washington, D.C. beginning in 1934 demonstrate that he was also equally determined to shape, albeit with some serious pragmatic constraints given his political and cultural ties to a “shrinking island,” the course of not only English but Anglo-American economic policy.

II. Freudianism and Modernist Economics: Irrationality and “Animal Spirits” in the *General Theory*

With respect to uncertainty, irrationality and “animal spirits,” as Keynes’s economic theory developed through the 1920s and the 1930s in the context of Bloomsbury’s modernism, it is essential to note the likely influence of Sigmund Freud. The Hogarth Press published Freud in English translation beginning in 1924. This project was undertaken by Bloomsburyites James and Alix Strachey and reviewed pseudonymously by Keynes, styling himself as “Siela,” in *The Nation and Athenaeum* during the summer of 1925 (Dostaler 107). Bloomsbury’s epistemological approach to modeling in the 1930s is foreshadowed by Keynes’s carefully measured appreciation of Freud’s modernist psychoanalytic narratives in the 1920s. A recognition of not only epistemological uncertainty and ontological vagueness, but also the role played by human irrationality, a close analogue to “animal spirits,” is central to Keynes’s (and Virginia Woolf’s) varying and somewhat equivocal reception of Freud. Keynes’s pseudonymous commentary in the *Nation and Athenaeum* suggests significant parallels between Freud’s psychoanalytic innovations and aspects of Bloomsbury’s modeling method and its limitations.

Keynes would later speak more disparagingly of Freud, asserting in “My Early Beliefs” that Moore’s influence “was a purer, sweeter air by far than Freud cum Marx” (58). But in his pseudonymous letter of 1925 he intervenes rather more even-handedly in the then-current debate:⁹

Professor Freud seems to me to be endowed, to the degree of genius, with the scientific imagination which can body forth an abundance of innovating ideas, shattering possibilities, working hypotheses, which have sufficient foundation in intuition and common experience to deserve the most patient and unprejudiced examination, and which contain, in all probability, both theories which will have to be discarded or altered out of recognition and also theories of great and permanent significance. (Keynes, 29 August 1925)

This constitutes, in essence, a claim that Freud’s new theories ought to be subjected to the Bloomsbury method, his “innovating ideas” and “working hypotheses” both welcomed as an initial, vague phase of modeling, but also recognized as a provisional stage that must in turn be refined by “the most patient and unprejudiced examination.” Keynes cavils at what he finds lacking in Freud’s empiricism, his “very small number of instances carried out in conditions not subject to objective control.” But if this detracts from the credibility of then-current scientific claims for psychoanalysis, that is no fatal matter: “at the present stage the argument in favour of Freudian theories would be very little weakened if it were to be admitted that every case published hitherto had been wholly invented by Professor Freud in order to illustrate his ideas and to make them more vivid to the minds of his readers.” Fictionalizing his own identity by adopting a pseudonym, Keynes here seems to suggest that the literary tropes in Freud’s texts are usefully resonant precisely because they are vivid in a literary fashion and because they call upon vague intuition rather than precise scientific

⁹ As discussed further in Chapter 4, an assessment of this pseudonymous review is necessarily complicated by questions of literary commodification, given Keynes’s role as general editor of *The Nation and Athenaeum*, with fellow Bloomsburyite and owner of the Hogarth Press, Leonard Woolf, serving as its literary editor.

proof: “the case for considering them seriously mainly depends at present on the appeal which they make to our own intuitions as containing something new and true to say about the way in which human psychology works” – and the “present stage” can, implicitly, be expected to give way to further improvements in Freudian theory and methodology.

Skidelsky also pinpoints Freud as an “important influence” on Keynes by 1925, noting his observation: “Was there any escape from the dilemma that economic progress seemed to depend on motives condemned as immoral by religion and neurotic by psychology?” (Skidelsky, Vol. II 234) Indeed, this gradual development in Keynes’s thought, foregrounding the import of irrationality and uncertainty, was overdetermined in the context of modernism and modernity. Maud Ellmann, in her project “to investigate the structure of modernist fiction, including Freudian psychoanalysis, which,” she contends, “could be seen as a serial fiction” (10), notes: “It is well documented that Freudian ideas were ‘in the air’” when modernist authors including Woolf (as well as James Joyce and Henry James) were active, “yet none of these novelists set out to write psychoanalytic fictions” (10). Indeed, Woolf “avoided reading Freud...for fear of being outmaneuvered by Freudian insights” (10). Freudian characterizations of both language and human behavior still proved somewhat infectious for the inhabitants of Bloomsbury, if to varying degrees. Among Bloomsbury’s writers, this was especially so for Lytton Strachey, in response to whose gift of a copy of *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* (1928), Freud wrote, “As a historian...you show that you are steeped in the spirit of psychoanalysis” (Meisel and Kendrick Appendix II).¹⁰

¹⁰ These influences were of course ongoing and general in Bloomsbury, and can be difficult to disentangle. For example, half a decade before the Hogarth Press translated Freud, Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* had, in biographer Michael Holroyd’s assessment, influenced Keynes’s literary style in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (Holroyd 428).

In his letter for *The Nation*, Keynes weighs, with seeming objectivity and in some detail, the claims of psychoanalysis as a social science. Psychoanalysis was newer than the Marshallian discipline of economics (itself only some decades removed in Cambridge from the more general category of moral philosophy); it was slightly older than Keynes's innovations to come in modern macroeconomics. Both Keynes and Freud use language as a tool, seeking not only to persuade fellow experts but to reach a broad audience in order to influence public discourse around concepts of subjectivity and human behavior in the midst of a "civilization" that is not only plagued with Freudian "discontents" but prone to the foreseeable repetition of war.¹¹ Both also recognize language as an essential medium for diagnosing and intervening in the individual and mass behaviors that propel such outcomes – although here, as a genuine distinction, Freud is typically more pessimistic than Keynes. John Forrester, in his study of "Freud in Cambridge," finds that "Freudianism...could help supply Keynes with a general psychology of the cultural unconscious" (19).

As early as his 1930 polemic against the gold standard, *A Treatise on Money*, Forrester explains, Keynes was making use of Freudian concepts and Freudian rhetoric:

...freely employing the language of pleasure postponed or indulged in, a language that stemmed from its utilitarian and now Freudian versions of the reality principle, he depicted those conservative forces who saw in gold the 'sole prophylactic against the plague of fiat moneys' as throwing over themselves 'a furtive Freudian cloak' – the unconscious attachment to gold that Freud's essay on anal erotism had described. Money Keynes described as a 'subtle device for linking the present to the future'. But if money were held for long out of circulation, it ceased to be money, it de-monetises

¹¹ Mary Poovey notes, with respect to the former discipline, that even the economics of the Victorian era was never wholly "rational" in its epistemology: "the codification of numerical, then statistical modes of abstract analysis, the institutionalization of protocols for inspecting, aggregating, and managing ever larger segments of the population, and the subordination of other definitions of value to quantification were unevenly produced alongside established ways of understanding, governing, and evaluating that did not simply vanish before some superior or more compelling rationality" (52).

– in the Freudian dialect that Keynes appreciated, gold turned back into faeces. (19)

For Forrester, Keynes was “a psychologist of economics before he became a Freudian” (20). Although I would argue that, given his even-handed but somewhat skeptical assessment of Freud in *The Nation*, his subsequent, darker view of Freud in “My Early Beliefs,” and especially in his utopian aspect, Keynes, although demonstrably and usefully influenced by Freud, was never exactly a “Freudian,” I concur with Forrester that “Keynes’s economics *required* a psychological underpinning for its portrayal of those economic virtues which, under changed circumstances, would become vices leading to the disaster of the Great Depression” (20) and that “Freud was ideally suited to the kind of portrait of the bourgeoisie and its unconscious character-traits that Keynes’s economics required” (20).

Keynes unmistakably invokes Freudian concepts of irrationality and the role of the unconscious in determining behavior in Part IV of *The General Theory*, where, in Chapter 12, he underscores the importance of “confidence” (148) – that is, a measure of certainty or its lack: “how highly we rate the likelihood of our best forecast turning out quite wrong” (148). Confidence, Keynes asserts, has been largely neglected by economists, and conclusions regarding the state of confidence “must mainly depend upon the actual observation of markets and business psychology” (149). Roadmapping this turn to empirical observation – in some respects, Part IV offers something of an economist’s analogue to a set of Freudian case studies, both of which set the groundwork for inductive theoretical innovation in these respective fields of modernist social science – Keynes advises the reader: “This is the reason why the ensuing digression is on a different level of abstraction from most of this book” (149).

Still in Chapter 12, Keynes makes ample use of “metaphor” (156), citing, *inter alia*, card games and newspaper contests to illustrate his points, in order to establish the factors

that influence long-term investor expectations. He emphasizes: “if the animal spirits are dimmed and the spontaneous optimism falters, leaving us to depend on nothing but a mathematical expectation, enterprise will fade and die” (162). But he also observes, in balanced language that recalls his carefully-modulated assessment of Freudian psychology in *The Nation*:

We should not conclude...that everything depends on waves of irrational psychology. On the contrary, the state of long-term expectation is often steady, and, even when it is not, the other factors exert their compensating effects. We are merely reminding ourselves that human decisions affecting the future, whether personal or political or economic, cannot depend on strict mathematical expectations, since the basis for making such calculations does not exist; and that it is our innate urge to activity which makes the wheels go round, our rational selves choosing between the alternatives as best we are able, calculating where we can, but often falling back for our motive on whim or sentiment or chance. (162-63).

Keynes considers further the impact of psychological factors on levels of macroeconomic demand in Chapter 15, on “The Psychological and Business Incentives to Liquidity.” Part IV of *The General Theory* then culminates with a crucial empirical observation, in Chapter 18, that the key factors influencing levels of employment and prices are not “established by laws of necessity” (254). Rather, they can be changed by means of “measures expressly designed to correct them” (254). The government policymaker can and should attempt to restore “confidence” (148); that is, by changing “psychological” as well as rational expectations, economic crises can be cut short and ameliorated. It is because in some respect linguistic fictions – comedic, tragic, farcical, or some admixture of these, a narrative bricolage that is never entirely static – must be woven around economic facts and irreducible economic uncertainties, in an iterative feedback loop, itself in part irrational and unconscious, that deliberate (or, of course, accidental and erroneous) policy choices can either further economic confidence or impede it.

Keynes necessarily and revealingly pays particular attention to the workings of language when he makes these new macroeconomic claims. If Chapter 12 relies on prose, Chapters 13 and 14 are fairly dense with mathematical modeling concerning factors that influence interest rates, yet, for the sake of the common reader, the most technical, historical discussion in Chapter 14 is set off in an Appendix. In Chapter 15, Keynes shifts *in medias res* from the language of mathematics to ordinary prose, “translating” his equations for liquidity functions (199-202), then linking back, citing an earlier chapter in Part IV, to revisit and emphasize his keyword of “uncertainty” – “We have seen in chapter 13 that *uncertainty* as to the future course of the rate of interest is the sole intelligible explanation of the type of liquidity-preference...” (201) – and then underscoring, yet again, “that the rate of interest is a highly psychological phenomenon” (202). Granted, only the expert economist or technically trained policymaker may be able to weigh critically all facets of this mathematical-linguistic argument. But Keynes’s general audience, too, is enabled by his rhetorical choices to grasp at least the central concepts of Part IV and to make some preliminary effort at assessing them, not only as individual readers, but potentially in a common civic debate.

If not exactly a herd of capering “ids,” insofar as their animal spirits are described, the Keynesian “businessmen” of Part IV seem rather like not-too-distant cousins to that Freudian psychic structure (itself a somewhat-reductive aspect of Freud’s social science model, and one that is somewhat altered from the original meaning of the German *Es* in English translation).¹² Rational they may sometimes be (162-63), but not always, and when

¹² For Keynes, this figuring of *homo economicus* as a non-rational creature, some denizen of a quasi-Freudian animal kingdom, is an extended trope. He writes in a private letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt on February 1, 1938, for example:

Businessmen have a different set of delusions from politicians, and need, therefore, different handling. They are, however, much milder than politicians, at the same time allured and terrified by the glare of publicity, easily persuaded to be ‘patriots’, perplexed, bemused, indeed terrified, yet only too anxious to take a cheerful view, vain perhaps but very unsure of themselves, pathetically

something more akin to ego gives way to something more akin to id, their behavior cannot be captured adequately within the reductive equations of a mathematical model. Words in syntactical combination, if necessarily “vaguer,” then prove more usefully flexible in a Wittgensteinian way, since they can convey a wider scope of behavioral and psychological information than mathematical variables arranged in equations. And the combination of both in *The General Theory* is arguably more rhetorically persuasive, for a wider audience, than either “language” alone might be.

There are striking parallels between this development in Keynesian macroeconomic theory and Virginia Woolf’s observation, in “Modern Fiction,” that “Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged, but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (4). Language that illuminates it as such, rather than merely enumerating the details of surface facts, can best present the “truth” of a character in fiction, Woolf contends; Keynes argues the same for a macroeconomic model that moves beyond simplistic assumptions about rational maximization of utility. Indeed, Freudian influences appear to be part of a larger, often figuratively and fictionally based, modernist project of representing human character and motivations. The shocking effects of World War One, the increasing complexities of modern economic systems, and the paradigm-shifting complexities of the Freudian “subject” work together in complex ways to change how human nature, human motivations, and the role of overarching structures, including governmental forms, narrative modes, and possible shapes of the modern novel, are conceived by the thinkers and writers of Bloomsbury.

responsive to a kind word. You could do anything you liked with them, if you would treat them (even the big ones), not as wolves or tigers, but as domestic animals by nature, even though they have been badly brought up and not trained as you would wish. It is a mistake to think that they are more immoral than politicians. If you work them into the surly, obstinate, terrified mood, of which domestic animals, wrongly handled, are so capable, the nation’s burdens will not get carried to market; and in the end public opinion will veer their way.

Skidelsky finds that the later Keynes “transvaluated values” in the *General Theory*, where “thriftiness becomes...a pathology, not a sign of health, and virtue brings catastrophe on the societies which practice it” (Vol. II 544). With respect to “transvaluating values,” Keynes indulges in a literary digression in Chapter 23, one that, in the broader context of the *General Theory*’s rhetorical and philosophical attributes, is really no digression at all. He quotes extensively from Bernard Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees* (1714), an allegorical poem reflecting on the linkages between private vice and public benefit. Keynes cites Sir Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf’s father and the author of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, for the proposition that, in this “cynical” text (359), Mandeville “easily showed that all civilisation implied the development of vicious propensities” (360). He then argues that an excess of frugality in the hive brings disaster, thus linking Mandeville to his own core thesis, in order to further persuade the reader that what seems fair is foul and foul is fair.

Mandeville’s poem is often read by literary scholars as satire, although neither Keynes nor Leslie Stephen appear to do so. Keynes’s purpose in discussing it is certainly serious: insofar as he sets Mandeville’s fable into the narrative structure of his own text, he places himself both in and in opposition to a line of eighteenth century economic and moral philosophers that includes not only Mandeville but Adam Smith, author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), as well as *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Three pages into his digression on the *Bees*, quoting a contemporaneous commentary about whether frugality might really enrich England as a country as well as its individual inhabitants privately (361) – a distinction-to-be between macroeconomics and microeconomics – Keynes cites Smith in a footnote: “Compare Adam Smith, the forerunner of the classical school, who wrote, ‘What is prudence in the conduct of every private family can scarce be folly in that of a great Kingdom’ – probably with reference to the above passage from Mandeville” (361 n. 1). As a

caution against rational calculation, Keynes's use of Mandeville in the *General Theory* is necessarily literary on some fundamental level. Moreover, Virginia Woolf seems to play against Keynes's source in her feminist economic polemic, *Three Guineas*, first writing to Vita Sackville-West on May 3, 1938, "I am reading for the first time a book which I think a very good book -- Mandeville's Fable of the bees [1714]," and then acknowledging *Bees* in an end note to her own historically kindred, yet significantly more radical, economic text.

Substantively and rhetorically, Keynes looks back to two liberal predecessor "worldly philosophers" even as he takes exception to both, at least in part, to further his own contemporaneous argument for governmental profligacy rather than thrift at a time of economic downturn. This is a moral argument as well as a technocratic one. In the last section of his closing chapter, Keynes addresses the historical stakes for prospects of peace and war: "I have mentioned in passing that the new system might be more favourable to peace than the old has been. It is worth while to repeat and emphasize that aspect" (381). Acknowledging the "several causes" of war (381), Keynes then highlights the "economic causes" (381), reviewing these against the backdrop of nineteenth-century history, in which he finds that the competition for markets "probably played a dominant part...and might again" (381-82). Keynesian macroeconomics can mitigate this potential cause of war, he contends, by enabling "a willing and unimpeded exchange of goods and services in conditions of mutual advantage" (383). Finally, in the closing lines of Chapter 24, Keynes places his *General Theory* squarely in the tradition of economics as moral philosophy: "soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil" (384).

Skidelsky stresses that "the question of whether the *General Theory* was a revolutionary break with classical theory or a rearrangement of its pieces concerned both critics and followers." (Skidelsky, Vol. II 594). Here, I think that the philosophical roots of

the *General Theory* – not only Moore’s, but Ramsey’s and Wittgenstein’s – may be particularly useful. When arranging for Wittgenstein to return to Cambridge in order to pursue his philosophical work in January 1929, Keynes had written to his wife, Lydia: “I must not let him talk to me for more than two or three hours a day.” (Skidelsky, Vol. II 291). This likely influence of Wittgenstein upon Keynes’s thinking in the 1930s, although it is necessarily somewhat speculative given the absence of detailed archival evidence, is, I think, potentially helpful in attempting to resolve a further question: does the *General Theory* represent a paradigm shift in economics? Scholars, who are somewhat divided on this point, generally base their analyses on the *General Theory*’s positioning with respect to Say’s Law (which holds that there can never be a “general glut”). But Keynes’s modernist methodology, incorporating a Wittgensteinian-influenced conception of vagueness, also deserves consideration when weighing the question of whether the *General Theory* constitutes a paradigm shift.

III. Economic Complexity and Linguistic Vagueness in the *General Theory*

The *General Theory* represents a further break, not with Moore’s ethics, but with his philosophy of language, in favor of pragmatic and modernist vagueness. In the *General Theory*, Keynes’s acknowledgment of epistemological uncertainty and his use of methodological vagueness are inextricably linked. “Keynesian” economic theory in the 1930s both builds upon and diverges from Keynes’s studies at Cambridge with Alfred Marshall. But, as noted above, it is also grounded in Bloomsbury’s involvement in philosophy and Keynes’s own earlier work in mathematical probability, which shifted increasingly from the idealization of Edwardian-era “certainty” toward recognition of the role played by the experiential element of uncertainty.

John Coates has traced the influence of the Cambridge debate around “common sense” upon the development of Keynes’s economic theory (11). According to Coates, “[t]he core of this argument was worked out by Wittgenstein, but it was carried into the social sciences by Keynes.” (xii) Drawing upon archival research, he finds that Keynes “was in close collaboration with Wittgenstein during the period in which Wittgenstein was discovering the challenge which vague concepts posed for analytic philosophy. (xii)¹³

Coates points to specific Keynesian language that demonstrates at least a partial shift from Moore’s phenomenology to Wittgenstein’s emphasis on vagueness. From a draft preface to *The General Theory*, he finds that Keynes displays the influence of contemporaneous debates in Cambridge philosophy concerning vagueness (Coates 87):

[...] when an economist writes in a quasi-formal style, he is composing neither a document verbally complete and exact so as to be capable of a strict legal interpretation, nor a logically complete proof . . . he never states all his premises and his definitions are not perfectly clear-cut . . . It is, I think, of the essential nature of economic exposition that it gives, not a complete statement, which, even if it were possible, would be prolix and complicated to the point of obscurity but a sample statement . . . intended to suggest to the reader the whole bundle of associated ideas . . . (*Collected Works*, Vol. 13, 469-70).

As Coates has observed, a number of examples from the published version of *The General Theory* also reflect the influence of Wittgenstein (95-98). These include, *inter alia*, a passage in which Keynes explains his skepticism concerning the utility of abstract, excessively formalized mathematical models for economic analysis:

¹³ Again, the limitations of archival evidence would seem to require a caveat here. Coates also acknowledges limitations to his observations: “[Keynes’s] case is pragmatic rather than ontological.” (11) For Keynes, “given that the causal factors at work, in macro-economics at any rate, are often historically specific institutions, and that market expectations are chaotic, it is best not to stray too far from concepts and mental constructs with which we have an immediate understanding.” (12) Otherwise, “If we sever this connection we’ll be adrift in confusion. However, for other questions it may well turn out that formalized theory is preferable. (11-12)

[...] in ordinary discourse, where we are not blindly manipulating but know all the time what we are doing and what the words mean, we can keep ‘at the back of our heads’ the necessary reserves and qualifications and the adjustments which we shall have to make later on . . . Too large a proportion of recent ‘mathematical’ economics are merely concoctions, as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependencies of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols. (Coates 96, quoting *The General Theory*, in *Collected Works*, pp. 297-98).

By embracing vagueness, Coates finds, Keynes was better able to “handle th[e] complexity” (95) of the social sciences. Keynes’s approach, as Skidelsky describes the development of the *General Theory*, tend to demonstrate an explicit recognition of the uses of Wittgensteinian vagueness in the years shortly after Wittgenstein’s return to Cambridge: “In one of his lectures in 1933, he said that creative thought begins as a ‘grey, fuzzy, wooly monster in one’s head. Precision comes later.” (Vol. II 443-44, citing *Keynes’s Lectures*, 6 November 1933)

Using an example that calls to mind contemporaneous developments in the physical sciences – in particular, the observer effect in quantum theory: not a Newtonian apple subject to the precisely calculable law of gravity, but “an apple which changes its mind as it falls to the ground” – Skidelsky acknowledges the problem of temporality in Keynes’s construction of his theory:

Keynes believed economics was over-addicted to ‘specious precision’ – making perfectly precise what was in reality vague and *complex*. It is significant that he refused to present the ‘model’ of the *General Theory* in mathematical form, even though he assembled its (verbal) elements in Chapter 18. The final choice is of a method of analysis most suitable to one’s theoretical, practical or persuasive object. Once uncertain expectations enter into the content of a theory, the problem of how to ‘model’ time becomes both overwhelmingly important and pretty intractable. Keynes asks us to imagine an apple which changes its mind as it falls to the ground. What definite statement can one make about the outcome of its flight? He had to find some way of allowing uncertainty to determine outcomes, while suspending its effect over a time-

period long enough for a definite result to establish itself.
(Vol. II 540)

Keynes set forth his *General Theory* in words; for the most part, he elected not to translate it into the language of mathematics, although, allowing for some tradeoffs between flexibility and precision, it was translatable. This was a choice. Aslanbeigui and Oakes note that, for Keynes, “economic theory as a universal set of doctrines that remained valid at all times and under all circumstances was out of the question” (218). Thus, “the project of *The General Theory* [...] was driven not by its own immanent logic but by interventions of economists in the great debate and by how Keynes and his supporters responded to them” (224).

Virginia Woolf had warned her readers, in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” that only a necessary “season of failures and fragments” might, by means of experimentation, influence and enable the progressive development of modern fiction. Similarly, Keynes “saw *The General Theory* as a work in progress subject to further clarification and revision” (Aslanbeigui and Oakes 223). There was a necessary vagueness, and a pragmatic methodology, implicit in this approach. When Keynes applied this method to economics he was, as Richard Overly observes from a historian’s perspective, addressing a rather challenged discipline: “by the 1920s and 1930s economic science was every bit as sophisticated and intellectually complex as the natural sciences; it was also a science that had no clear answers, ‘a festering mass of assumptions’ as H. G. Wells unkindly put it (Overly 58). Keynes saw his “revolution...as a process of continuous reconsideration, revision, and renovation” (Aslanbeigui and Oakes 224), and one that mandated “theoretical flexibility” (224)¹⁴

¹⁴ Almost immediately, however, Keynes’s junior colleagues at Cambridge began to formalize and mathematicize the *General Theory*, and they necessarily altered it to some degree in the process, in order to make it more palatable as a policy tool. As Skidelsky puts it:

Wittgenstein had posited, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, that the phrase “Stand roughly here” might not only be “perfectly usable” despite its lack of precision, but that an attempt at further precision, or a Mooreist kind of ideal exactness, might actually fail (§ 88). This is a pragmatic insight: if it works, it does so as a matter of empirical evidence, regardless of its vagueness from an analytic standpoint. Beginning with Ramsey’s critique of the *Treatise on Probability*, Keynes moved increasingly toward a methodology that employed such pragmatic vagueness in the decade before he published the *General Theory*. However, in the years immediately following its publication, his younger Cambridge economics colleagues moved increasingly away from vagueness – from “standing roughly here,” where a common debate could be had and where there was room to encompass Moore’s ethics as a guide to policy, one that might even acknowledge the explicit philosophical aim of securing a material basis for the “good life” (itself experimentally and usefully “vague” in terms of definition) – to standing precisely *there*, on an expert’s narrower but more easily defensible disciplinary ground. As Cambridge economist Joan Robinson characterized the progression toward formalization, while herself contributing to its development, this was “bastard Keynesianism” (Skidelsky, Vol II 621; see also Aslanbeigui and Oakes 218-19).¹⁵ It was

Just as there was a theory embedded in the vision, so there was a model embedded in the theory. Keynes often said he preferred to be vaguely right than precisely wrong; but like all economists he was prone to the fallacy of misplaced precision. Above all, he wanted to influence policy. [...] So key propensities of a *laissez-faire* economy like the ‘inducement to invest’ and the ‘propensity to hoard’ which are presented as inherently unruly have to be made sufficiently tractable to be acted on by the policymaker.

Keynes’s key move was to assemble a model capable of determining an equilibrium position short of full employment.” In this “static model”: “The psychological factors which determine the action (the propensities to consume and hoard, the inducement to invest) become stable mathematical functions of variables (the level of income, the rate of interest) ‘which can be deliberately controlled or managed by central authority in the kind of system in which we actually live.’” (Skidelsky, Vol II 546, citing *General Theory, CW*, vii, 247).

¹⁵ Serious problems would surface over half a century later, only after formalized neo-Keynesianism had given way to neoclassical *laissez-faire*: mathematical models might work perfectly as theoretical constructs, but the principles of uncertainty and irrationality tended increasingly to be neglected when economists or financial engineers formulated (often proprietary) model assumptions over-optimistically from messy real-world data. A

probably also the only available pragmatic alternative if Keynesianism was to become securely institutionalized as a framework for governmental policy initiatives.

Inevitably, the *General Theory* generated much controversy and resistance upon publication and throughout the second half of the 1930s, both in Britain and in the United States. In contrast to the tenets of laissez-faire capitalism, which hold that the free market will always correct itself in the long run, and should be left unimpeded to do so, Keynes's *General Theory* emphasizes the necessity of fiscal and monetary policy interventions by government in order to ameliorate a crisis. For the proponents of laissez faire, the consequences of non-intervention are ethically justifiable; for Keynes, they are not. (In the United States, the laissez-faire view was exemplified by Herbert Hoover's Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, whose free market policy imperatives in the early 1930s – "Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate" – drove the Hoover administration further into the depths of the Great Depression.)

Economic historians Aslanbeigui and Oakes have characterized *The General Theory* as "a declaration of war" (223) against classical economics; Krugman, while emphasizing that Keynes "came to save capitalism, not to bury it" (xxvi), recounts the old guard's backlash, which was transatlantic: "the arrival of Keynesian economics in American classrooms was delayed by a nasty case of academic McCarthyism" (xxv). Due to this resistance, it was not until the outset of World War Two that the *General Theory* (already somewhat formalized and altered) would gain a strong policy foothold – one that, for the most part, endured until the era of Reagan and Thatcher.

number of economic thinkers – including Posner and Skidelsky – began to agree that too many overly formalized (and barely regulated) models at financial institutions were interfacing rather too disconcertingly with real-world economic inputs by 2008. They began to advocate, accordingly, for the "return" of some kind of Keynesianism. (See Posner; Schlefer; Skidelsky, *The Return of the Master*; Taylor.)

Despite its controversial impact and its arguable status as a paradigm shift,¹⁶ the continuities between the *General Theory* and its predecessor influences are remarkably strong. One strand of continuity is clearly based in Keynes's Edwardian-era Mooreist ethics, in which money ought not to be privileged as an end in itself but used effectively and enjoyed as a material basis for art and the "good life." Another, related line of continuity seems to link the utopianism that is often implicit, and occasionally explicit, in the *General Theory*, with a line of nineteenth-century "worldly philosophy" that can be traced back to William Morris and John Ruskin, and that is also linked with the artistic experiments of the Bloomsbury modernists.

With respect to Keynes's utopianism, Skidelsky observes that his "most profound and poetical pages on economics have to do with the encroachment of money values on use values, the triumph of making money over making things" (Vol. II xxiv). He finds that "[f]or Keynes, as for the classical economists, Depressions are the wages of sin, only the sin is not spending too much, but spending too little on the things which make for a 'good life'" (xxiv). For Skidelsky, the *General Theory* thus "can be interpreted as a morality play" (Vol. II 543). Contemporaneously, Keynes portrays in the *General Theory*: "a life-denying *rentier* class which practices non-consumption in order to postpone the day of enjoyment; a business class driven by fantasies of triumph and disaster; a working class victimised not by calculated

¹⁶ In his Introduction to the 2007 edition of the *General Theory*, Paul Krugman finds the classical model, based on Say's Law, to be "a model in which ideas we now take for granted were literally unthinkable" (xxx). Leon Surette explicitly finds this to constitute a Kuhnian paradigm shift: "Keynes's insights have permanently altered economic opinion and the behavior of monetary authorities, even though the 'Keynesian' policy of active management of the money supply is currently in eclipse" (9). For Surette, "One of the major attributes of Keynesian economics is its attention to 'Kuhnian' features of the discipline, that is, to the predispositions that underpin economic theories" (108). Moreover, he argues: "Keynes's followers credit him with instituting a Kuhnian paradigm shift within economics, and the hostility with which it was received tends to support their view" (113). Keynes himself wrote to George Bernard Shaw in January 1935, expressing the belief that his *General Theory* would "largely revolutionise – not, I suppose, at once but in the course of the next ten years – the way the world thinks about economic problems" (Skidelsky, Vol. II 520).

oppression but by the unsteady commitments of their controllers” (543). But there is also the promise of “a radiant vision of cities beautified and marshes drained, and the good life brought within reach of all under the benevolent guidance of a Platonic state” (543) -- the hoped-for gains of state-managed full employment achieved, in conjunction with the preservation of full, liberal political and economic freedom.

Keynes describes this utopia both in Chapter 16 of the *General Theory* and in his 1930 essay, “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren.” The Skidelskys, writing as economist and political philosopher respectively, have drawn upon the latter as a springboard for their 2012 book, *How Much is Enough?* In this recent text, pitched to a general audience, the Skidelskys critique “the disappearance from public discussion of any idea of the good life” (145). They find that “[t]hose fixed objects of ambition and desire gestured to by Keynes and Virginia Woolf – the £500 a year, the room of one’s own – have long since melted away, leaving nothing but the shifting fortunes of ‘the Joneses’ to guide us” (145). The latter, they argue, present no ethical limitation on monetary greed, status-driven consumption and the valorization of workaholicism for its own sake, whether its consequence is wealth, waste or Ruskinian illth. Countering this current neoliberal paradigm for “how we live,” the Skidelskys draw upon and adapt the Mooreist and Keynesian concept of the “good life” as a core argument for their own postmodern polemic about “how we might live.”

IV. “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren”: Keynes’s Utopian Aspect

In Chapter 16 of the *General Theory*, Keynes imagines that a “properly run community equipped with modern technical resources, of which the population is not increasing rapidly, ought to be able to bring down the marginal efficiency of capital in equilibrium approximately to zero within a single generation” (220) – in other words, to achieve

sustainable plenty – “so that we should attain the conditions of a quasi-stationary community where change and progress would result only from changes in technique, taste, population and institutions” (220). This “may,” he asserts, “be the most sensible way of gradually getting rid of the most objectionable features of capitalism” (220).

In “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren,” Keynes acknowledges that “[w]e are suffering just now from a bad attack of economic pessimism” (1). Looking to the future, however, he foresees a modern acceleration in the accumulation of capital (2), which, combined with technological improvements, “means in the long run *that mankind is solving its economic problem*” (3). Keynes forecasts “that the standard of life in progressive countries¹⁷ one hundred years hence will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day” (3). He then distinguishes between “absolute” economic needs and those “of the second class, those which satisfy the desire for superiority” (4); the latter “may be insatiable” but the former are not (4). Positing an eight-fold increase in the standard of living, Keynes anticipates that, within a century, the need to struggle for subsistence will be ameliorated -- but with mixed consequences:

If the economic problem is solved, mankind will be deprived of its traditional purpose. [...]
When the “economic problem” is solved, man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem -- how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won him, to live wisely and agreeably and well. (4-5)

Accordingly, Keynes proposes, experimentation will be required. Lack of work should present no difficulty for artists: “Yet it will only be for those who have to do with the singing that life will be tolerable and how few of us can sing!” (5) As for the rest, he predicts:

¹⁷ Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, this phraseology would seem to invite a critique from the perspective of postcolonial theory. (The invitation to a Marxist critique, given the subject, is of course implicit throughout.)

“For many ages to come the old Adam will be so strong in us that everybody will need to do some work if he is to be contented” (5). But this will not be onerous: “three hours a day is quite enough to satisfy the old Adam in most of us!” (5) The pursuit of money for its own sake will be cast aside: “The love of money as a possession – as distinguished from the love of money as a means to the enjoyments and realities of life – will be recognized for what it is, a somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semicriminal, semi-pathological propensities...” (5-6) With this will come “great changes in the code of morals” (5). And a Mooreist paradise seems in the offing: “We shall once more value ends above means and prefer the good to the useful. We shall honour those who can teach us to pluck the hour and the day virtuously and well, the delightful people who are capable of taking direct enjoyment in things, the lilies of the field who toil not, neither do they spin” (7). This, says Keynes, “will all happen gradually, not as a catastrophe [...] The course of affairs will simply be that there will be ever larger and larger classes and groups of people from whom problems of economic necessity have been practically removed” (7). Until this utopia has been realized, he advocates an experimental method: “Meanwhile, there will be no harm in making mild preparations for our destiny, in encouraging, and experimenting in, the arts of life as well as the activities of purpose” (7).

Of course, it now seems quite unlikely that, by 2030, the “economic problem” will have been solved in this utopian fashion. Skidelsky finds that the essay “sums up many of the ambivalences in Keynes’s own thinking and psychology” (Vol. II 237). And yet, even if Keynes was wrong in his predictions (or in his assumptions about later generations’s ability to live up to them), “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren,” is worth a serious analysis, for it reveals Keynes as a Bloomsbury modernist in interesting ways. Clearly, Keynes here conceives of economics not as an end in itself but as a basis for the production

of art and the achievement of the good life. This, in contrast with traditional free market assumptions, which presume that rational actors in the marketplace seek to maximize utility for themselves in purely monetary terms, furthers the possibility of productive dialogue between Keynesian liberalism and Fabian socialism – contemporaneously, between the Liberal and Labour parties – and it can also be shown to link Keynesian economic and policy aims with earlier, Victorian-era experiments of Morris and Ruskin.

There is a certain commonality in Morris’s nineteenth-century assumption that everyone will want to do useful, crafts-based work, and in Keynes’s argument in “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren” for similar “experiments and reforms” toward the three-hour workday, even when economic necessity is lifted. The historical crises of the Great Depression and World War Two allowed Keynes’s macroeconomic theories about the necessity of governmental intervention to prevail, but the prospect of optimizing “the good life” during peacetime held no such urgency for policymakers. Perhaps because it was too easy to construe, or misconstrue, as elitist or of “niche” appeal, this aspect of Keynesian economic theory (and moral philosophy) remained utopian – which, as for Morris and Ruskin, and certainly for Bloomsbury’s own modernist project as a whole, is not necessarily to say without some genuine and ongoing cultural influence.

Granted, we might fairly argue that Morris’s model of a crafts-based, artistic and socialist utopia reflects a *de facto* utilitarian calculus of what would constitute the greatest pleasure for Morris, who is perhaps also implicitly assuming that everyone will weigh the pleasures and pains of nineteenth-century British life as he does. And Skidelsky observes that Keynes’s utopia: “suggests an enlarged Bloomsbury at the top and bread and circuses for the masses. It is a paradise of leisure. But what will most people do? It is also typically parochial, being confined to the ‘civilised’ world.” (Vol. II 237). Perhaps Keynes’s implicit

contemporaneous audience for “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren” was quite deliberately limited – to that of Bloomsbury, the Apostles and fellow travelers – rather than the public at large.¹⁸ And yet, despite the very circumscribed practical impact of his utopianism, Morris did cultural work with sufficient resonance to influence his modernist successors. Might the same be true of the utopian strain in Keynes’s work? Jennifer Wicke (albeit foregrounding the group’s consumerist and marketing tendencies rather than its sometime-Ruskinian “underconsumptionist” ethos¹⁹) has observed interestingly in this context: “Bloomsbury can be seen as an invented community, in intention almost a utopia of and for consumption, following on problems delineated by William Morris and Oscar Wilde, among others, about the production of art in an inequitable, and capitalist, society” (Wicke, “‘Mrs. Dalloway’ 6).

Keynes’s utopianism also did much to help him negotiate for common ground among the Liberal and Labour parties; this made his economic theories and policy prescriptions more influential than they might otherwise have been.²⁰ However, Skidelsky

¹⁸ With respect to Keynes’s audiences for this utopian essay, Skidelsky notes: “The first version of ‘Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren’ was read to the Chameleon Club in Cambridge on 10 February 1928. JMK then took it to the Essay Society of Winchester College on 17 March 1928 [...] The paper had another airing at the Political Economy Club in Cambridge on 22 October 1928...and Keynes read it to the Apostles on 31 May 1930. He then undertook a major revision for a lecture in Madrid in June 1930, which was published in the *Nation* on 11 and 18 October 1930. It was substantially this version that appeared in *Essays in Persuasion*. The main revision was to incorporate a reference to the great depression, which had started in 1929.” (Skidelsky, Vol. II 664)

¹⁹ Ruskin had taken on Mill’s (and Ricardo’s) views on political economics in “Ad Valorem.” He posits a different concept of “value” in that 1860 text: “To be ‘valuable,’ therefore, is to ‘avail towards life.’ A truly valuable or availing thing is that which leads to life with its whole strength. In proportion as it does not lead to life, or as its strength is broken, it is less valuable; in proportion as it leads away from life, it is invaluable or malignant.” Ruskin also declares, in section 61 of “Ad Valorem”: “The real science of political economy, which has yet to be distinguished from the bastard science...is that which teaches nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life: and which teaches them to scorn and destroy the things that lead to destruction.” Morris’s views, too (e.g., “take accurate note of everything in the shop windows which is embarrassing or superfluous to the daily life of a serious man...only a foolish habit makes even the lightest-minded of us suppose that he wants them,” “How We Live and How We Might Live” 195), are comparable with respect to this “underconsumptionist” ethos.

²⁰ As Skidelsky explains:

underscores: “Keynes emphatically rejected socialism as an *economic* remedy for the ills of laissez-faire” (Vol. II 233). Rather, he “admired...its passion for social justice (even though he distanced himself from it); ... the Fabian ideal of public service; and its utopianism, based on the elimination of the ‘money motive’ and ‘love of money’. It was his utopianism which links up his work as an economist with his commitment to the good life” (Vol. II 234). I think these latter two elements – utopianism and a Mooreist commitment to the “good life” – conflated with Keynes’s methodological use of vagueness and uncertainty in the *General Theory* and his use of the rhetorical modes of Bloomsbury discourse, especially in its cross-generic and polemical forms, also argue strongly for a characterization of Keynes as a Bloomsbury modernist.

V. Keynes as a Bloomsbury Modernist

The rhetorical stance of the *General Theory* demonstrates Keynes’s literary kinship with the style of the “Bloomsbury polemic.” At the outset, Keynes acknowledges awareness of his multiple audiences, and he does so in an international context. Keynes’s Preface opens: “This book is chiefly addressed to my fellow economists. I hope that it will be intelligible to others.” (*General Theory*, 2007 ed xv). In addition, Keynes prepared individually-tailored Prefaces for the German, Japanese and French editions. Each of these international

In most of his political commentary Keynes is engaged in a dialogue with the Labour movement. This sometimes involved him in very ambiguous use of language as he tried, at one and the same time, to distinguish his position from that of socialism and also to stress the compatibility of a range of Liberal and socialist aspirations. [...] the ideal he sometimes chose to call socialist has much more to do with ends such as leisure, beauty, grace, excitement, variety...than with equality, fraternity, democracy. Moreover, this socialism, Keynes thought, would come into its own when further economic progress had rendered capitalism unnecessary -- a future remote enough to satisfy even the rhetorical requirements of Ramsay MacDonald. (Vol. II 232)

Prefaces acknowledges explicitly the contemporaneous state of economic theory for readers in the given language, and argues the cause of Keynesianism against that background.²¹

Moreover, as is frequently the case with Bloomsbury's writings, the *General Theory* crosses generic lines. It repeatedly and effectively breaks the generic contract for a standard economic treatise, in order to better engage and persuade its readers. Much of this, surely, was directed at persuading expert and public audience alike, and also, literally, at keeping the more casual members of the audience reading, so that the core policy arguments of the *General Theory* might enter more widely into the common political debate. As Paul Krugman observes, in his editorial "Introduction to the New Edition" of 2007: "In telling people how to read *The General Theory*, I find it helpful to describe it as a meal that begins with a delectable appetizer and ends with a delightful dessert, but whose main course consists of rather tough meat." (Krugman xxviii).

Keynes was explicit about his wish to encourage public debate about the core concepts of the *General Theory*. In a 1937 article, he expressed this in terms that recall Froula's characterization of Bloomsbury's own dialogue, aiming toward a *sensus communis* – even if that "common sense" is one that can, from its fundamental premises, never be static or fully achieved:

I am more attached to the comparatively simple fundamental ideas that underlie my theory than to the particular forms in which I have embodied them, and have no desire that the latter should be crystallized at the present stage of the debate. If the simple basic ideas can become familiar and acceptable, time and experience and the collaboration of a number of minds will discover the best way of expressing them. (Keynes, "The General Theory of Employment" (1937), *CW* vol. xiv)

²¹ Such consideration of multiple audiences could also backfire, particularly in view of later (and arguably already-foreseeable) historical crisis. Skidelsky notes some "unfortunate wording" in the German preface concerning the applicability of the *General Theory* to a "totalitarian state" (Vol. II 581).

Of course, perhaps it is better that such “common sense” cannot be “crystallized” in any final or absolutist way. Some element of vagueness may be useful in adapting economic policy to the variations of historical circumstance, or at least in avoiding blunders when the historical facts no longer fit the theoretical assumptions that justify a particular policy initiative.

The *General Theory* is, among its generic variations, a polemic, but a rhetorically flexible and (multiple) audience-engaging one. Against the historical context of the 1930s, a brief contrast of Keynes’s rhetoric in Chapter 22 of the *General Theory*, compared with Ezra Pound periodical prose of the 1930s, both advocating, *inter alia*, a reassessment of Silvio Gesell, shows why the distinction matters. Politics was a constant in Bloomsbury, a perennial subject of both conversation and action at a time when many modernist writers, in contrast to Bloomsbury’s figures, were turning far to the right or far to the left in what we might characterize as an uncompromisingly absolutist manner. In Chapter 23 of the *General Theory*, Keynes advocates, in quite reasonable language, for a measured assessment of the “cranks” – economists whose theories about deficiencies in aggregate demand had perhaps been too hastily and completely rejected. In addition to Gesell, he places Malthus and a number of others in this category, but he opens the call for reassessment with Gesell, in terms that recall the utility of vagueness, since he “honored that they preferred to see the truth obscurely and imperfectly rather than to maintain error, reached...by easy logic...on hypotheses inappropriate to the facts” (*CW* vii 371)

As Leon Surette explains, in the context of his own study of Pound’s economic discourse:

Keynes begins his discussion with Silvio Gesell, whose *Natural Economic Order* (1916) was brought to his attention in the postwar years. However, he confesses that at first, ‘like other academic economists, I treated his profoundly original

strivings as being no better than those of a crank.’ Later he paid Gesell’s views tribute because ‘their significance only became apparent after I had reached my own conclusions in my own way’ (353). Though Gesell ‘has constructed only half a theory of the rate of interest’ (356), Keynes concedes that ‘the idea behind’ Gesell’s principal policy recommendation, stamp scrip, ‘is sound’ (357). (Surette 115)

Pound, too, polemicized on behalf of Gesell’s theories (Surette 115-16). But when he did so, he was neither measured in his tone nor, too frequently, did he seem at all audience-aware. Persuasive dialogue toward the goal of a *sensus communis* was not the aim in Pound’s figurative, rhetorical “village”; rather, uncritical listening followed by unquestioning capitulation to the “village explainer’s” absolutist credo of the moment – which tended more and more toward irrationality, fascism and anti-Semitism as the 1930s shifted into the 1940s – was. Pound’s biographer, Tim Redman, notes “a rhetorical split from his readers, a semantic schizophrenia. Imagism taken too far or, rather, imagism coupled with the ideogrammatic method carries this danger of losing contact with its audience” (203). (Carpenter 506).²² As Bob Perelman notes, “Pound’s politics were finally solipsistic, making sense only when viewed from the center of his writing” (14).

Leon Surette observes, with respect to Pound’s economic polemicizing: “Pound’s story is a cautionary tale. A major factor contributing to his embitterment and hatred was his belief that all difficulties must yield to bold, simple solutions” (Surette 10). Pound was aware of Keynes’s *General Theory*, but he discounted it. Surette comments: “Pound’s attitude toward Keynes was established in the twenties, but does not seem to have been based on much

²² Humphrey Carpenter offers an illustration of the problem:

In 1936 [Pound] drew up a manifesto demanding clearer terminology in the public discussion of economic issues; yet it was couched in such obfuscating and idiosyncratic language as to be scarcely comprehensible. He now used his personal collection of favourite words to the point of self-parody: ‘...the putrid habits of the bureaucracy...you cannot get the whole cargo of a sinking paideuma into the life-boat...You can divagate into marginalia...’ (Carpenter 505)

acquaintance with his writing” (117). In contrast, Keynes was becoming somewhat *less* polemical as the crisis of the 1930s intensified, so that he might be more effective in influencing policy. Skidelsky observes: “Bloomsbury’s wit, digs at stupid bankers, mad politicians and so on were put aside in favour of a wholly serious, unadorned development of his case; perhaps he felt, too, that the world depression was too serious a disease to be treated by wit.” (Vol. II 470) Furthermore, although he was “not notably pro-American” (Skidelsky, Vol. II 489), he overcame this reluctance sufficiently so that “From the 1930s onwards his efforts at persuasion were increasingly directed toward the United States. [...] [because] he understood that America, not Britain, held the key to the survival of capitalist civilization.” (489) In May 1934, Keynes traveled to the United States, after having consistently refused invitations in the 1920s, and he met with Franklin Delano Roosevelt “for an hour” (Skidelsky, Vol. II 506). His Open Letter of 1934 to Roosevelt subsequently proved effective in influencing American economic policy.²³ (Pound’s visits with Mussolini in the 1930s, as might be imagined, did not make a similar impression.)

What are the stakes for such rhetorical distinctions? To put it most simply, as Richard Overly characterizes the state of public debate in Britain while fascism was rising on the Continent:

The orgy of collective political and racial violence set in motion in the 1930s and 1940s accounted for perhaps as many as 20 million European civilian dead from Spain to the eastern Soviet Union. Britain remained largely immune from the political bloodletting beyond a handful of British communist victims in the Soviet terror of the mid-1930s and those who died fighting in the Spanish Civil War. There were no violent ‘creed wars’ to puncture Britain’s continued

²³ Notes Skidelsky: “Keynes is nowadays credited with having had little influence on the New Deal -- except right at the end of the 1930s. And this is true in the sense that Roosevelt refused to come down decisively in favour of Keynes’s ideas. He preferred to keep all balls in play [...] But Keynes had considerable influence on specific policies, and the Open Letter is an example.”(Vol II 494)

commitment to a form of parliamentary democracy that flourished almost nowhere in Europe by 1940. (Overy 265)

It is fair to conclude that not only economic policy, but language, and how it was wielded in political discourse, mattered in keeping this so.

Finally, when considering Keynes as a Bloomsbury modernist, it is crucial to recognize a continuing ethical aspect that can be traced to Moore's Edwardian-era thought in *Principia Ethica*. As Skidelsky notes, underscoring the continuing influence of early Moore upon Keynes's composition of *The General Theory*: "Inspiring his approach were the ethical doctrines of G. E. Moore, his own early reflections on probability, and his understanding of the purpose of government [...] This was part of his Edwardian inheritance." (Vol. II 541). Simultaneously, in the aftermath of war and economic crisis, Keynes's approach to economics can be situated in the context of Bloomsbury's interdisciplinary modernism – an experimental modernist paradigm that changed over time and in significant ways in response to the forces of historical contingency.

Chapter Two

Virginia Woolf and the Impossibility of Economic Modeling

Why, and to what effect, as Virginia Woolf reflects upon the interplay of economics and literature, does she repeatedly foreground contradiction, complexity and irreducible vagueness? Woolf's insistence upon acknowledging complexity constitutes useful and realistic exploration, mostly avoiding too-easy, and potentially erroneous, fixed certainties about what is necessary to achieve a fully engaged and sustainable artistic life. Woolf experiments with possibilities, some pragmatic and some impossibly utopian, to optimize her "model" for the woman artist of her own class in particular, but also with potentially more general applicability, in a changing modern England. Her experimental model of literature, and her "modeling" of economics in her work, is highly skeptical about absolutism – and this is a crucial element of the Bloomsbury method that she holds in common with Keynes.

Woolf's inquiry into economics starts earlier and is continued and developed more thoroughly in both her fiction and non-fiction (polemics, essays and other prose) than is usually assumed. Alex Zwerdling is one of the first literary scholars to have emphasized how this theme pervades Woolf's work, noting that Woolf "had an acute sense of exactly how much class and money contributed to the shaping of the individual" (88) and a belief, persisting in her modernist fiction, "that a detailed and nuanced sense of class identity is an

indispensable tool of the novelist” (89).¹ Jennifer Wicke has focused primarily on what she characterizes as Bloomsbury’s “coterie consumption,” but, as she analyzes Woolf’s explorations of class and market dynamics in *Mrs. Dalloway* (119-28), Wicke also argues for a linkage between Woolf and Keynes in the context of modern and modernizing art and economics. She gestures more expansively toward something of the “grey, fuzzy” Bloomsbury method and model, observing that Keynes “retheorizes the market explicitly along...fuzzy, chaotic lines” (116). Contra Wicke, but also describing a kind of blurriness with respect to economic and political issues across the span of Woolf’s *oeuvre*, Kathryn Simpson foregrounds what she characterizes as “Woolf’s ambivalence about consumerism, capitalism and commodity culture” (50). Building upon Mark Osteen’s and Marcel Mauss’s analyses of gift economies from a social sciences perspective, Simpson examines the “complex, contradictory and inconsistent interaction of gift and market economies in Woolf’s work” (1).

An insufficiently explored piece of this puzzle relates to language, vagueness, and the acknowledgment of uncertainty in all of Woolf’s iterative attempts at economic modeling. This approach, as demonstrated in Chapter One, is also foundational to Keynes’s development of the *General Theory*. To date, although Wicke has come closest to implying its importance in her reflections upon Bloomsbury and the modern market, none of the literary critics who have examined Woolf’s engagement with economics have considered directly the question of uncertainty and modernist vagueness in Bloomsbury’s attempts at modernist economic modeling.

¹ Zwerdling finds that Woolf “translated the predominantly political, legal, and institutional terms of the debate on women’s rights and talents current in her own time into psychological and economic ones. [...] issues of money and class dominated her social thought, so that the presence of an economic perspective in her thinking about women should come as no surprise” (228-29).

Here, however, two economists have recently signposted directions that literary critics may profitably follow. Tyler Cowen (2008), albeit without addressing Bloomsbury, has posed the provocative question: “Is a novel a model?” (319). Noting that the subject has been barely studied by scholars from either discipline, Cowen suggests that some novels “present verbal models of reality” (a literary scholar will, admittedly, find this oversimplified) and that others may be likened to “a kind of simulation, akin to how simulations are used in economics” (319). Cowen argues that novels-as-models may provide useful input for social scientists to consider in formulating their theories. For Woolf, I think, any such model is not only an empirically driven “simulation,” but one that is sufficiently complex and internally contradictory, either in itself or across the arc of her *oeuvre*, that it is impossible to get a clear and defined result from it. Indeed, Woolf’s economic models, as depicted in her fiction and in the fictionalized aspects of her essays, polemics and other prose, precisely because they are empirical, fuzzy, and foreground a quintessentially modernist vagueness, were effective in problematizing the governing economic paradigms of modern Britain as well as potential alternatives.

Craufurd D. Goodwin, a Duke economist and scholar of Bloomsbury, has recently suggested that Keynes, Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry can be analogized to members of a modern “think tank” (67), each in their own and mutually influencing ways making a theoretical shift in the 1930s from focusing on problems regarding the “supply side” of artistic production to those of the “demand side.” Goodwin emphasizes: “But, most important, unlike any other well-known think tank [Bloomsbury] also employed fiction as a way of getting ideas out for discussion” (70). The interdisciplinary lines of inquiry suggested by Cowen’s and Goodwin’s recent work are, I believe, essential ones to explore in the context of Bloomsbury’s literature and economics, particularly at a time when, following

large-scale and almost catastrophic failures in the performance of contemporary neoclassical economic models that over-privilege formalization and abstraction, it would be useful for critical attention to turn increasingly to a consideration of the mutual interrelation of economics, cultural studies, and the humanities.

How does Bloomsbury minimize error in its new kind of modern economic and linguistic modeling? As noted above, an emphasis on epistemological vagueness is important and has been largely neglected so far by critics who have explored Bloomsbury's "fictions of finance." A primary goal of the present chapter is to open up this line of inquiry further. But another element is also crucial. Woolf in particular and Bloomsbury in general can shift modes, from something akin to Keynes's "grey, fuzzy" initial phase of modeling to a more precise and concrete kind of calculation or accounting, and back, whichever works best in a given economic scenario – or fictional scene. Both techniques remain available, avoiding extremes of either analytical abstraction that is no longer reasonably reflective of messy empirical reality, or utopian impracticality, in an atmosphere of experiment, change and critical debate.

The thinkers and writers of Bloomsbury use *both* techniques, on an experimental, ad hoc basis, maintaining the capacity to shift between them in theory and in practice. We can see this in Keynes's, and also the slightly silly fictional character Ralph Denham's, propensity for both detailed account-keeping and speculative leaps: each employs both, at the right times, to achieve his simultaneously pragmatic and idealistic aims. We can see it in the young Vanessa Bell's reluctant conscription by her father into keeping household accounts, then, in minor conspiracy with the Stephens' cook, Sophie Farrell, making sure the bills got paid but fictionalizing dates and numbers to avoid Sir Leslie's irrational rage (Light 45). We can see it in the Woolfs' precise and exacting attention to the balance sheets of their small press – an

experimental venture that was intended not to maximize profit, but, with a meta-level purpose of cultural intervention, to avoid losing money (Rosenbaum 155). The trope that best covers all of these instances might be not poetry hidden in an account book (as Isa Oliver troublingly does in *Between the Acts*), but modern language, modern thought and modern art effectively intertwined with the economic and material basis that sustains it.

Where can Woolf's economic understanding – feminist, liberal, and arguably utopian to varying degrees – best be located in her writings, perhaps even in passages where she is not referring explicitly to economics, and how can this change our readings of these texts as she repeatedly problematizes both Victorian and Edwardian domestic economy and modern professional work? Issues of money, class, valuation and economic circumstance become absolutely central in Woolf's second published novel, *Night and Day*.² Part One of this chapter will show how this “novel of fact,” as Woolf characterizes it, can be read usefully in conjunction with *A Room of One's Own*, to illuminate both works' economic and sociocultural concerns.³ Part One will also consider how Woolf's feminist and (often but not always) Keynesian economic analysis is also, to some degree, generalizable as a class analysis, consonant with Keynes's view of economics as a necessary substrate for art and the good life. Part Two will explore economic variations and repetitions in Woolf's mid-1930s “novel of fact,” *The Years*, and *Three Guineas*, its sister progeny from the “one book” that was in draft *The Pargiters*. Part Two will also foreground the impossibility, for Woolf, of socioeconomic modeling with a clean, defined result. Yet it will find productive sociocultural critique –

² They are present, however, and with something of an oppositional quality to the status quo, from the very beginning of her *oeuvre*. As early as 1915, in her first published novel, *The Voyage Out*, Woolf casts a coldly analytical eye on the Edwardian marriage market. Moreover, as Celia Marshik notes, Helen in *The Voyage Out* analogizes a businessman in to a prostitute – except, given their respective situations, not only can the prostitute be defended but the businessman can be thought of as “worse,” since “[b]oth are engaged in trade but, according to Helen, “Thornbury is by far the worse whore” (Marshik 863).

³ *Night and Day* has been more frequently read in conjunction with *Orlando*, and that “fictional biography” will also be discussed briefly for purposes of comparison in Part II.

critique that is more pointed with respect to questions of class and politics than had been true of Woolf's writing a decade earlier – in her deliberately failed, yet also partially successful, late modernist attempt to confront intensifying historical crisis.

I. Domestic Economy and the Language of Its Discontents: *A Room of One's Own* and *Night and Day*

Surely Virginia Woolf's best-known aphorism on the subject of economics and literature, the one that readers are most apt to assume they can recall accurately, is that a woman must have five hundred pounds a year and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. That isn't quite the way Woolf ever states the prescription in *A Room of One's Own*, however. Among several variations of the refrain that recur throughout Woolf's polemic, the closest version to this popularized paraphrase is voiced by a narrator who recounts the advice of one of *Room's* fictionalized personae, Mary Beton: "She has told you how she reached the conclusion – the prosaic conclusion – that it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry" (109). "Prosaic" and specific this advice may be, but it is immediately problematized, for the once-removed "conclusion" of Mary Beton opens a paragraph that concludes with the narrator's acknowledgment of error as a useful means of experimentation: "in a question like this truth is only to be had by laying together many varieties of error" (130).

Still, as an often-repeated refrain in *A Room of One's Own*, the central imperative around which Woolf elaborates her polemic, this prescription, stated for the first and only time without enumeration as "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4), seems perhaps to set forth an exact and literal "model" for a particular and limited audience of aspiring women writers to employ. Woolf reiterates the model often,

always with slight rhetorical variations (37, 69, 88, 98, 109, 112, 116-17). *Room* calls for such women to lay their hands on resources that may admittedly be difficult to access but that are conceivably within reach given their implicitly assumed class positioning and cultural capital: perhaps by means of an aunt's legacy (37), perhaps, if one is a metaphorical middle-class granddaughter of Aphra Behn, by one's "wits" (69), perhaps in recently opened "professions" (117). At present, claims Woolf's narrator – that is, on or about October 1928 or October 1929, the respective dates of her two lost Cambridge lectures that formed the *ur*-text for *Room*, and the final version's publication date – "some two thousand women" (117), more than ever in the past, can manage to earn this sum.

The prescribed resources themselves seem to be quite specific. But, in fact, the two key requirements for this primary audience – "£500" and "a room of one's own," with sole possession if not the symbolic lock assumed by the language of any given iteration – are considerably less concrete, more metaphorical and thus more consistent with Woolf's usual mode of rhetorical indeterminacy than they may initially appear. Of course, even a literal exchange-value measure depends on the factor of time. Moreover, Woolf's "five hundred pounds a year" carries, particularly in the context of Cambridge economics, historical and class connotations, metonymic elements that are at least as relevant as a precise accounting of purchasing power. Melba Cuddy-Keane, examining a number of articles published in *The Nation and Athenaeum* in early 1927, notes that "[s]etting perhaps the target figure that Virginia Woolf was to use one year later in *A Room of One's Own*, Keynes asked, "How many authors are there in England who can reckon on earning from their books above £500 a year on the average?" (63).

Also, Alfred Marshall, Keynes's mentor in economics, had problematically but influentially contended that material prosperity was the necessary condition of "moral

growth,” and that a “gentleman” needed £500 a year for this to be possible (Skidelsky xxiii). If the latter is indeed Woolf’s source for this number, whether directly or through Keynes, this source would not only underscore the indeterminacy in relative purchasing power of an identical fixed annual sum from Victorian to pre-Great Depression times, but would demonstrate that, like the class-inflected coinage of *Three Guineas*, Woolf’s central trope for money in *Room* is also class-inflected and drawn from Victorian commonplace. It simultaneously undoes this commonplace, by putting the sum in the hands of women instead of gentlemen, in a polemic that encourages them to imitate the rule-breaking virtues of Aphra Behn rather than the repressive “drawing room” norms urged upon Mary Carmichael’s grandmother.

Woolf’s model is insufficient to address the needs of “poor” poets, men or women, and that is a flaw. But it does allow enough flexibility for readers ranging from middle to upper-middle-class, with a prospect of earning their 500 pounds a year or so by wits or inheritance, valuing and calling upon Aphra Behn’s robust virtues or trying to move beyond Mary Carmichael’s drawing room limitations, to attempt a range of related, but never identical, experiments, building iteratively upon empirical failures and successes to improve the model. This prescription is, in essence, both Keynesian and Mooreist. On the one hand, Woolf recognizes that relative impoverishment can be degrading, both literally and in its impact on “heart, body, and brain all mixed together” (18), which we might, from her vivid description of the effects of scanty meals in a women’s college (17-18), characterize as “animal spirits,” even several years before Keynes’s famous promulgation of that term in the *General Theory*. But excess is similarly to be avoided: “watch in the spring sunshine the stockbroker and the great barrister going indoors to make money and more money and more

money when it is a fact that five hundred pounds a year will keep one alive in the sunshine” (39).

The seemingly “fixed” and exact variable of five hundred pounds a year is sufficient for independence, for a modern measure of as much artistic and personal freedom as the culture might allow for. It is neither grossly insufficient nor egregiously greedy. One can “stand roughly here” – as an indeterminate variable, it is Wittgensteinian, usefully vague.⁴ “Five hundred a year” is not only Keynesian in its emphasis on refusing to privilege excessive accumulation (39), but also in its somewhat utopian time frame of “a century or so” (117), a forward-looking prospect that Keynes would later invoke in the *General Theory* and “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren.”

Woolf’s “room,” too, is a complex metaphor as well as a literal workspace. It must be “of one’s own”; it must have a metaphorical or literal lock on the door, not so much to connote property ownership as to allow for the possibility of independent and serious work. Some rooms are not conducive to literary labor – for example, Mrs. Hilbery’s study in *Night and Day*, materially replete to a fault, but overstuffed with legacies of the past, is a place where, as Andrea Zengulys phrases it, “Mrs. Hilbery and Katharine spend entire days *not* producing Alardyce’s biography” (66). This is not only the case for women writers; similarly, Woolf implies that Ralph Denham’s faded childhood room with its molting parrot will need exchanging for a cottage in the greenwood before books – unparroting ones, unlike William Rodney’s – can perhaps be written.

⁴ Judith Allen and a number of other critics have observed a more general linguistic privileging of indeterminacy in *Room*, a text where Woolf’s rhetorical choices include the strikingly repetitive use of “but,” ellipses and parentheses, which serve to complicate and foreground indeterminacy and to open a textual space for the reader “to hold several ideas in place while assessing their validity, or simply to resist any final judgment” (Allen 11).

Finally, what audience does Woolf's "model" in *Room* encompass? At first glance, the "common reader" may feel once, twice or three times excluded, if such a reader is not a "daughter of educated men" who is also an aspiring writer. But the problem of whom the polemic is addressed to becomes blurrier as Woolf develops her arguments, raising questions of class that are not susceptible of easy generalization and entirely clear answers. Late and only briefly in *Room*, Woolf expands her potential audience to both sexes, addressing directly the question of class. She relies upon empirical facts, quoting Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's observations about the deleterious effects of poverty upon male poets. Woolf cites the historical record: "The poor poet has not in these days, nor has had for two hundred years, a dog's chance" (100). She shifts from a feminist to a generalizable class analysis with the somewhat disputable blanket declaration: "That is it. Intellectual freedom depends upon material things" (100). Woolf's declaration of course polemically ignores the exceptions: successful artists of either gender who have prevailed despite significant material and sociocultural obstacles. This late counterargument and refutation only adds complexity to the "model" reiterated in *Room*, opening a question of the ultimate scope of Woolf's arguments with respect to class, gender and occupation.

But this is only a glancing mention and it complicates as much as it resolves about matters of audience and class, nor does Woolf urge any programmatic activism to make the "money" and "room" more widely available those from classes outside of the "Bloomsbury fraction." Here, it is important to observe that most class analyses of Woolf and Bloomsbury have tended to be either oversimplified or controversial. Raymond Williams, in 1978, influentially acknowledged the complexity of Bloomsbury's class positioning, characterizing its individual members as "a (civilizing) fraction of their class" ("The Bloomsbury Fraction" 169). John Xiros Cooper, a few decades later, observed of Bloomsbury that "[t]he special

character of the English class system played a significant role in both the Group's external relations and its sense of internal cohesion" (244). Claims Cooper: "Of all the class systems in Europe, the English was perhaps the most "post-structuralist," giving every appearance to the external world of unity and regimentation, but on the inside rather decentered, open, contradictory, full of nooks and crannies for the dotty and the erring, but endlessly forgiving of its eccentric or intelligent portions" (245). Zwerdling has observed that Woolf "was never able to decide whether her criticism of certain conventions was designed to liberate herself and her coterie or to transform the larger social world" (41). More recently, Hermione Lee has noted "Virginia [Woolf]'s equivocal and contradictory attitudes to English social divisions" (568); Light has drawn upon archival sources to further illuminate these contradictions; and Sean Latham has explored Woolf's sometimes ironic self-interrogation as a "snob" and a cultural change agent who critiques and resists conventional hierarchies.

Moreover, the role of women, artists and intellectuals further complicates any attempted analysis of Bloomsbury's class positioning. As Mary Poovey observes of women, in the context of her historicization of the concept of class: "neither political economy nor Marxist critique has been able to theorize women's place in the society to which classificatory thinking belongs" (48).⁵ John Guillory has emphasized complexities concerning the concept of class with respect to different, historically-changing categories of intellectuals (134). These variations in the scholarship suggest the analytical utility of an approach that is not an either-or analysis limited to a few potential clear class divisions but

⁵ Indeed, in *Room*, Woolf suggests repeatedly that gender complicates class categorization. "Why was one sex so prosperous and the other so poor?" (25) she inquires; Rebecca West's charge that "men are snobs" is "possibly true if uncomplimentary" (35). Nor do the more privileged classes necessarily best foster woman writers: Woolf celebrates Aphra Behn's "middle-class" and "plebeian virtues" (67), and her need to "make her living by her wits" (67). She acknowledges that class can be a "barrier" (92), especially for women: respectable and upper-middle-class Mary Carmichael, trying to be an observer elsewhere "in the spirit of fellowship" (92) may find this a literary weakness, for "[s]he will still wear the shoddy old fetters of class on her feet" (92).

the recognition of a vaguer, more fractured and fractioning range – one that, avoiding absolutes but committed to undoing the status quo, can itself promote socioeconomic and cultural change.

Woolf's digression in *Room* suggests an expanded set of thought-experiments for her “model,” generalizing from the woman writer to all writers. Moreover, although the possibility is only briefly gestured at here, Woolf explores, and here seems to look back toward, a consideration of similar questions in her earlier “novel of fact” of the Edwardian era, *Night and Day*. As Suzanne Raitt has noted parenthetically in her Introduction to the Oxford edition, “[t]he fantasy of ‘a room of one’s own’...is present with especial force in *Night and Day*” (xxi). Both *Room* and *Night and Day* address economic matters in general and the writer’s financial needs in particular. Both are written on the eve of the Great Depression and at a point in Woolf’s *oeuvre* that is before – and in the case of *Room*, just on the verge of – the economic and political crises of the 1930s and the development of Keynes’s *General Theory*.

How can we interpret the necessities for the artist that Woolf lays out in *Room* in terms that also apply to Woolf’s earlier characterization of a young man, Ralph Denham, portrayed in a dilapidated and oppressively domestic “room” of his own in *Night and Day*, as he weighs his earnings from an oppressive profession and the risks and prospects of a literary vocation? Conversely, what of Woolf’s characterization of Mary Datchet, who attempts, in lieu of settling for a place in either the traditional domestic economy or the modern alienated workforce, to seek a genuinely valuable and unalienated professional and political role, but at the cost of isolation?

I would argue that there is another rhetorical and figurative linkage between these two works – there are parallels, or perhaps a line of continued consideration, between the

fictionalized “Mary” personae in *Room* and the fictional character of Mary Datchet in *Night and Day*. In *Room*, John Whittier-Ferguson finds Woolf “dispersed among an ostentatiously fictitious gathering of possible personae (*Designs of the Gloss* 78) – ‘call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name as you please’” (*Room* 5). Crossing genres (but not departing from the technique of fictionalization), I believe we can find a close cousin of these Marys, another permutation of the personae that successively inhabit *Room*, in Mary Datchet. Mary is also an experimental “type” of sorts. She is more flatly drawn and less complex than Woolf’s main protagonist, Katharine Hilbery. If Mary Seton’s voice in *Room* is “uncertain” (*Designs of the Gloss* 79), Mary Datchet’s is so predictably didactic at times that – in contrast to Katharine, who craves certainty in mathematical abstraction but ultimately realizes that little of it is to be had in her changing Edwardian world – she seems more a “thought experiment,” a modernist *gedankenexperiment*, than a fully modern Woolfian fictional character.⁶ Mary sees Katharine’s options between work and marriage, for example, in strictly binary terms, but Katharine and Ralph, making “an account of the future” at the conclusion of *Night and Day* (441), and reflecting upon the palimpsest of London before them, seem to imagine a blurring and expansion, which opens at least a potential, although not a guarantee, for both to eventually write newly imagined books in newly imagined rooms.

Change, essential and often disruptive, is an essential characteristic of modernism. *Night and Day* illustrates Katharine’s and Ralph’s capacity to change, not rashly, but to calculate and, literally, pay the price for modern freedom and the possibility (not entirely certain by novel’s end) of a partnership that may foster authentic love and work. At the

⁶ Conversely, as Kathryn Simpson has observed, Chloe and Olivia in *Room* literally “shared a laboratory together, and were thus in control of ‘experiments’, scientific, literary, sexual and, as relatively new professional women, economic” (Simpson 31).

outset, Ralph seems fully accounted for, and limited by, his profession. Trammeled by familial expectations, he has managed to save “three or four hundred pounds” (25), but he is grumpy about the means that have enabled this not-quite-Kantian end: “What does it matter what sort of a room I have when I’m forced to spend all the best years of my life drawing up deeds in an office?” (27).

However, Ralph is also a speculator. This quality fascinates his sister Joan, whose own double entrapment seems to Ralph “a dog’s life”: “[w]hen you’re not working in an office, you’re worrying over the rest of us” (28). It is familial obligation and what Joan characterizes as “Spartan self-control” (25) that keeps Ralph at the kind of alienating professional work that Woolf would later caricature in Mr. Ramsay’s metaphorical alphabetic ambitions in *To the Lighthouse* and characterize in *Three Guineas* as resulting in the narrowing of a human being to a creature who has lost “sight, sound, and sense of proportion.” But it is his “romantic and childish folly” (25) that lets him prefer, and plot toward claiming, a rather fantastical cottage where he will write history.

Escaping law for a cottage in the greenwood requires an economic accounting. Ralph has to consider the numbers; perhaps this is his own variation on Katharine’s preference for the precision of mathematics, for the numbers are useful, but not decisive. This is a new kind of accounting: it reworks questions of value in a Mooreist vein, and the fuzzy equations to optimize this model sometimes call not only for accumulation but for speculation and risk-taking: value of coin, value of time, value of work and love and community are all brought into question and they are not always translatable in fixed and equivalent terms. The old dispensation is too reductionist, but it has its necessary place in Ralph’s exacting and

slightly exasperating reckoning. Equally important is Ralph's Keynesian recognition that, at a certain point, accumulation to the exclusion of all else destroys rather than promotes value.⁷

Exact accounting gives way to modernist indeterminacy; concepts of valuation are here best interpreted through the lens of economic anthropology. Ralph's modernist accounting meets with Mary's and Katharine's approval, but Woolf's more impersonal and distancing narrative voice seems to caution that it might not add up in his individual attempt. And yet Ralph's new valuation of labor, time and money is very much akin to Woolf's "500 pounds a year" read as metaphor in *Room*; it is the material basis for something *else*, independent, unalienated literary work performed within a marriage that is a quasi-modern partnership and among a modernizing community of friends. This is a fictional iteration of the dual Bloomsbury model of "value," one representation of what value and the "good life" in G. E. Moore's terms might encompass in a modern economic context. Ultimately, perhaps *Night and Day* itself might be characterized as a "thought experiment," drawing upon and mapping potentials for Bloomsbury's own modernist experiments.

Mary, Ralph and Katharine are all engaged, in quite different ways and with varying degrees of success according to their own terms, in experiments in "modern" living. Raitt cites Woolf's characterization of Mary when she thinks: "What was the good, after all, of being a woman if one didn't keep fresh, and cram one's life with all sorts of views and

⁷ Here, Ralph recognizes what the awkward Mr. Tansley in *To the Lighthouse* cannot. Both young men are acutely aware of what Tom Wolfe would call "status markers" and their own relatively unprivileged economic and professional class standing among the upper-middle-class Hilberys and Ramsays, respectively. But Tansley is trapped by the need to affirm and improve his status and so, as Latham notes, he "badly manages the delicate economies of class distinction" (87). Stuck in a symbolic social game, he craves recognition from those whom he perceives as his betters and is easily angered by any perceived slight. Ralph, a more detached player, is more effective as he accumulates capital in his alienating but pragmatically useful profession and courts Katharine *chez* Hilbery, but he retains the capacity to judge both settings critically and (with perhaps-necessary support from his modern friend Mary and his modernizing fiancée Katharine), eventually exercises agency in totaling up his accounts, calling them sufficient, and making a speculative but not unduly risky leap to change the terms of his game. Ralph's marriage to Katharine is, interestingly, also a melding of class resources, promising positive change for both members of the pair.

experiments?” (Introduction xxvii). Ralph’s and Katharine’s oppositional dialectic seems essential, too, in furthering their dual experiment, and both echo the conclusion of *Room*, where Woolf closes the narration of Mary Beton and exhorts the reader: “You have been contradicting her and making whatever additions and deductions seem good to you” (130).

If, at first glance, Ralph’s sudden decision that “Katharine Hilbery’ll do – I’ll take Katharine Hilbery” (19), conflating the language of matrimony with that of economic acquisition, seems to confirm that *Night and Day* will be a traditional novel, centered on a marriage plot and crafted in a highly realist mode, the occasional vagueness of Woolf’s language as early as this second chapter – Ralph has “consciously taken leave of the literal truth” (19) just before he makes his resolution – signals that it will be one with increasingly modernist variations, undercutting the ordinary expectations of the genre, and paralleling the young people’s deliberate distancing from their Victorian forbears.⁸ But this too is not wholly decisive; perhaps invoking Morris, Katharine handles a book of her grandfather’s poetry to admit, “we don’t even print as well as they did” (15). This “vagueness” only increases as the novel progresses, for soon enough, Ralph recognizes that he has been imagining Katharine as a “phantom” and a “dream” (80), and by the concluding chapters it signals a marked shift toward high modernism.

But the shift is not complete. For Bloomsbury, “fuzzy models” work best for literature – and economics, and, as Katharine’s and Ralph’s courtship suggests, perhaps even interpersonal relationships. As Megan Quigley has observed, Woolf and other modernist authors “probe[] vagueness as the best way to examine psychological depth, to depict sexual indeterminacy, or to register disenchantment with the capitalist, bourgeois, and symbolic status quo while still existing within those systems” (105). The economic element of these

⁸ In their first meeting, both Ralph and Katharine critique the Victorians: Ralph wants no “great men” (15) and Katharine is more severe in her assessment of Ralph when Mrs. Hilbery likens him to Ruskin (11-12).

literary experiments is similarly modernist. Woolf's move toward the vague, the un-
enumerable, the unaccounted for, ties into new ways of thinking about economic matters
and models – Keynesian ways, feminist ways, and potentially socioculturally and artistically
transformative ways. Becoming modern, for Woolf in *Night and Day*, is about entering into
new economies and reframing measures of value, without abruptly or completely dropping
older ways, yet casting them into doubt and acknowledging their flaws.

As Ralph and Katharine attempt sociocultural and economic change together, class
issues become important. Katharine is making an unconventional marital choice. Ralph is
marrying up, and he is also changing his profession, for the worse monetarily but perhaps
for the better substantively. Katharine's cousin Cassandra also improves her economic
position, more traditionally, when she accepts William Rodney's proposal. Seen through the
lens of Woolf's characterizations, Edwardian class definitions and stratifications thus fracture
and multiply in *Night and Day*. Woolf presents the Cassandra-Rodney pairing as a traditional
but sensible match – both characters are a bit limited – but, while allowing that prospect to
be a positive decision for this particular couple, she opens a strong critique of the traditional
Edwardian domestic economy when she portrays Katharine, in her first encounter with
Ralph, pouring tea, fulfilling her expected social role, but using only a fraction of her mind in
this “six hundredth time, perhaps” (5) that she has been tasked with helping her mother in
this repetitive ritual.

As Ford Madox Ford observes in *The Spirit of the People*, it would be impolite to talk
about “things” (294) – serious ones – on such an occasion.⁹ Cassandra and Rodney, we are
given to assume, possibly couldn't if they tried. But transgressively, if obliquely, Ralph and

⁹ Taboo “things” for Edwardian tea time conversation, notes Ford, encompass love and money: “they include, in fact, religious topics, questions of the relations of the sexes; the conditions of poverty-stricken districts – every subject from which one can digress into anything moving” (Ford 297).

Katharine do. They speak (with rather shocking frankness for a first encounter) about money, even as they set up a conversational paradigm that is more about debate and genuine exchange of views than conventionally reflecting the gentleman “at least twice the size he really is” (*Room* 36). If their tête à tête does not double Ralph’s reflected size, it does seem to engage more than “a fifth part” (5) of Katharine’s mind – something new in the “extremely nice” (5) Hilbery house, even as the material comforts and social niceties of that house begin to be called into question, in the pivotal year of 1910, by the not-quite-yet-modern duo.

Thus, acknowledging class differences, Ralph, perhaps defensively, states: “We’ve never done anything to be proud of – unless you count paying one’s bills a matter for pride” (13). This ought to be awkward, but almost-modern Katharine ends up conceding the point: “You pay your bills, and you speak the truth. I don’t see why you should despise us,” she says (14). He rejoins, “almost savagely” (14), that she will “never know the pleasure of buying things after saving up for them, or reading books for the first time, or making discoveries” (14). Possibly the savagery of Ralph’s speech hints at a degree of envy, but when they turn to the subject of work, Katharine concedes that she doesn’t write (14) and she doesn’t “leave the house at ten and come back at six” (15) – that is, she does not have a profession or paid work.

Katharine maintains order, helps to manage the household, and shows life “to the best advantage” (37). That this “accounted for her satisfactorily” (37) is an assessment that is framed in quasi-economic terms but (like mathematics) will prove insufficient despite – or because of – its seeming precision to fully describe her character and her potential for change. And yet, the narrator’s perspective on the issues remains a bit inchoate. Cassandra perceives the Hilberys’ circumstances quite differently – again in economic terms, but here with awareness of experiences that the material base can enable instead of foreclose:

An indefinable freedom and authority of manner, shared by most of the people who lived in these houses, seemed to indicate that whether it was a question of art, music, or government, they were well within the gates, and could smile indulgently at the vast mass of humanity which is forced to wait and struggle, and pay for entrance with common coin at the door. (318)

Cassandra is grateful to be admitted. But she is naïve, unoriginal, and glad to marry a man who, stuck in the repetitive imitation of the past, cannot write but thinks he can, and whom we are given to understand Katharine is certainly right to refuse. This seems to suggest that Ralph has the better of the socioeconomic critique. Cassandra wants in; Katharine will attempt to break free.

So, in a different way, does Mary Datchet, who, as noted above, is perhaps the closest analogue to the fictional personae in *Room*, as well as the most modern figure in *Night and Day*: for Mary, work is more satisfactory and less alienating than any other aspect of her social existence. But this is still not an unproblematic resolution, since Mary loves Ralph but Katharine wins him. In addition, Mary draws sharp and unforgiving boundaries between work and marriage as life choices for women, with seemingly no prospect of combining them. Katharine, conflicted, envies Mary's work and its impersonality: "in such a room one could work – one could have a life of one's own" (236). Mary "like[s] working" (310), and Katherine thinks she "should like to start something" (310) too. Perhaps a little too peremptorily, this is not something Mary seems open to encouraging: "'Marriage is her job at present', Mary replied for her" (311). Combining or connecting the two seems not to be an option, at least from Mary's perspective, but that leaves the reader a bit skeptical. Since it is difficult to imagine Ralph as close-minded to discussing the subject of Katharine's work or lack of it – their first tea time conversation devoted considerable time to the issue – this introduces a potentially jarring note, in economic terms, a zero-sum game based on forced

choice and a scarcity of options. Indeed, despite her friendships and the sociopolitical engagement of her work, Mary is also greatly isolated, and, as here, this “outsiderness” is sometimes both valorized and problematized in *Night and Day*.¹⁰

Finally, there are larger questions which go largely unaddressed in *Night and Day*, and that, although they are acknowledged in *Room*, do not constitute that polemic’s central focus. The domestic economy in *Night and Day* represents not only a waste of human potential, its repetitions and repressions allowing Katharine to use only a fraction of her mind, but the domestic economy also supports the running of the professional, alienated economy – the hierarchical framework that Woolf critiques in *Three Guineas* as a progenitor of recurring violence and war. As Woolf herself revisits the “novel of fact” in the 1930s with *The Years*, she addresses a wider range of permutations of the domestic economy than in *Night and Day*, and she turns more directly to a critique of the macroeconomic circumstances that cannot be disentangled from her characters’ private dilemmas and experiential arcs. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf recasts the early thought experiments and feminist economic arguments of *Room*, radicalizing them to a greater extent in response to new historical necessity. The title and structure of this polemic, its argument woven not around three votes, nor three hours of volunteer work, but three units of money, bespeaks a Keynesian recognition of economics as a substrate for cultural and political influence. But recognition of the status quo does not imply acceptance of its terms. Rather, Woolf’s economic model, altered and further radicalized in *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, expands to explore the necessity for wide-scale sociocultural change.

¹⁰ As will be discussed further in Section II, we might compare Sara’s and Nicholas’s conspiratorial “outsiderness” in *The Years*, and the “Society of Outsiders” in *Three Guineas*; the “outsiders” in these later texts seem situated with less contingency in a social context of their choosing. Perhaps, as with Bloomsbury itself, this underscores the essential role of community in sociocultural experimentation. The status of “outsiders” is a major trope in Woolf’s *oeuvre*, and consideration of an economic component is crucial to an analysis of such figures.

II. Outmoded Coinages? *The Years* and *Three Guineas*

In the 1930s, as her early attempts at drafting *The Pargiters* give way to a second literary pairing of novel and polemic, Woolf turns against much of her characterologically based project of the twenties, and her style changes radically. She effects these changes in large part through the formal device of repetition, on a variety of levels, in her fiction. And yet there are continuities that we can trace back to the post-World War One, pre-Great Depression pairing of *Night and Day* and *A Room of One's Own*: a line of quasi-“realistic” and polemical modernist experimentation that brackets Woolf's high modernist oeuvre. Even as it crosses a modernist variation of realism with modernist “vagueness,” also arguably linked with repetition and variation, this experimentation plays with and problematizes a utopian sociocultural and economic ideal that is akin to the utopianism of Keynes's “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren.” Both texts draw upon and vary, in the context of modernism, Morris's and Ruskin's underconsumptionist utopian experiments of the nineteenth century. What is also distinctive about Woolf's experimentation in the late works, of course, is that it is situated in a feminist perspective; it calls into question both the repressive aspects of the domestic economy (here, Morris and Ruskin seem for obvious reasons much less perceptive) and that of alienated professionalization. Woolf's characters tend not to simplistically write off the “waste land” of the City of London (Mary Datchet, contra T.S. Eliot's faceless “many,” finds it fascinating), but rather its more alienating extremes, and to a greater degree by the 1930s than in *Night and Day*.

John Whittier-Ferguson has recently analyzed Woolf's use of repetition in her late fiction, emphasizing that here “she alters her aims...for a great many reasons, preeminent

among them the sociopolitical changes in England and Europe of the 1930s” (“Repetition, Remembering, Repetition” 246). War is a central focus for Woolf’s repetition in *The Years*, but “the economic question” too is a significant and repeated trope. As Grace Radin notes, the novel “is developed through a reverberative structure, with a continuity that works through a series of repetitions and reflections on past events, so that phrases and situations recur again and again, seeming the same, yet each time a little different” (227). One of the key repetitions in *The Years* concerns “reverberations” and “reflections” on the motif of economics as the opening scenes of the novel, set in the 1880s, give way to the Edwardian and modern eras. Ultimately, the violence of war and the violence of economic crisis are linked, and Woolf’s treatment of neither lends itself to conclusive or unduly optimistic answers.¹¹ To some degree this also calls into question the economic prescriptions and hopeful new patterns that the “Marys” and Katharine and Ralph had attempted to think toward in Woolf’s pre-Great Depression writings: Woolf’s economic model, altered and further radicalized in *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, expands to embrace wide-scale social change, but with noticeably less certainty that this can be accomplished at all, far less peacefully, as, given the group’s pacifist commitments, it must be within a Bloomsbury paradigm.

Early in *The Years*, Woolf introduces Colonel Abel Pargiter in two dichotomous social and economic settings, public and private – the rooms of his club and the rooms of his mistress. The comfort of the former public setting underscores the dinginess of dirty Westminster, with children running in the streets. The Colonel notices that when, nearing 40

¹¹ The latter is a significant departure from Woolf’s arguably more politically naïve utopianism in *Room* and her open but more hopeful conclusion to *Night and Day*. Moreover, as Whittier-Ferguson observes of Woolf’s “open-endedness” in the later works, although he and other critics including Froula have read it as utopian and in counterpoint to the rising totalitarianism of the 1930s, this cannot be an uncomplicated or definitive reading: “I have grown less sure that its heroic-utopian orientation effectively counterbalances the nightmares of history” (244).

and with a child boarded out, his mistress worries about money for the washing, she looks old (8). Woolf describes her “lean, poverty-stricken-looking bag” (8) and the Colonel’s impression that her rooms are “a dingy little hole” (9). She claims to have lost a sovereign and they talk about money: “It came to one pound – no, it came to one pound eight and sixpence [...] The Colonel slipped two sovereigns out of his little gold case and gave them to her” (9). One kind of exploitative market transaction concluded, the Colonel arrives at Abercorn Terrace, where two of his daughters have been preparing tea. As in *Night and Day*, Woolf portrays this ritual of the domestic economy in terms of oppressive repetition: “Everything seemed to take such an intolerable time,” thinks Delia Pargiter, waiting for the tea kettle to boil (10).

This is 1880, and, at first glance, it seems a static world. On the contrary, if historical change is the backdrop to the individual protagonists’ stories in the more traditionally plot-driven *Night and Day*, *The Years*, less focused on individuals, encompasses a wider pattern of differing socioeconomic and historical fates. The Pargiter siblings and their relatives are depicted most fully, from Eleanor’s earnest upper-middle-class charity work to Kitty’s “successful” marriage to the wealthy Lord Lasswade – Kitty cannot own their land – to their “outsider” cousin Sara’s descent into relative poverty amid the cheap lodgings in a boarding house. Change, instability, and the incursions of war are foregrounded as the novel moves from Victorian to Edwardian to modern times. Servants also receive attention – Crosby, introduced in the beginning scenes at Abercorn Terrace, is drawn with some real sympathy and her displacement when the house is sold opens a possibility of genuine social and political critique. And yet, as critics such as Alison Light have noted, significant deficiencies, sometimes recognized by Woolf herself, limit her post-Great Depression effort to expand the fictionalized portrayal of the economic and sociocultural “other.”

Eleanor, the eldest Pargiter sister, represents Bloomsbury's gradually intensifying critique of the socioeconomic status quo and this critique's well-meaning sociopolitical commitment to economic justice, while she also reveals its limitations. Eleanor's efforts at work and philanthropy are both admirable and mockable. On the one hand, Eleanor carries forward some of the tropes that Woolf employs in her characterization of Mary Datchet. Her efforts with housing for the poor constitute non-alienating labor, but she herself is a somewhat socially isolated figure in modern London. On the other hand, unlike Mary's feminist activism, Eleanor's charity efforts seem more than a little ineffectual, suitable enough for an upper-middle-class daughter of a Colonel, but rather too limited to be taken seriously as "real" work or activism. Overseeing low-income "cottages" occupies her more as a hobbyist of the leisured classes than a genuine activist on behalf of the downtrodden. (The opposite tactic is not endorsed in *The Years*, either: Woolf portrays younger sister Rose's overt activism, which includes brick-throwing on behalf of women's suffrage, as problematic because of its potential violence.)

Eleanor's work hardly threatens anyone who is comfortable with the economic and social *status quo*, including Colonel Pargiter, who "was proud of her in his own way, and she liked him to be proud of her" (105). The Colonel does not want to hear about her work, since "[h]e had no sympathy with people who were foolish about money, and she never got a penny interest: it all went on repairs" (105). But he treats her to a cab downtown to see her barrister brother Morris argue a case, and she enjoys the respite from her usual omnibus, as well as "the old childish feeling that his pockets were bottomless silver mines" (106). Positioned comfortably as a daughter and sister of successful Victorian and Edwardian

gentlemen, she can be generous with her labor at little felt cost or risk, remaining safely distant from any need to make real common cause with her cottagers and workmen.¹²

Eleanor as an aspiring wage-earner keeps the household accounts for her father, recapitulating Vanessa Bell's role in the Stephen household (Light 45); she also negotiates repairs and projects for her houses. Her father's patriarchal pooh-poohing aside, she garners a basic competence in the realm of money and accounting. She even seems, if only for a moment, to reach some genuine perspective and (admittedly transient) happiness in the novel's closing reunion scene. But Woolf depicts Eleanor's insight here too in conjunction with economic and material circumstances, ones that are contingent and subject to risk and change, and that quickly undoes any prospect of that resolution being stable or lasting.

In this final reunion scene, Delia brushes off Eleanor's worry about broken glasses since they are "very cheap" (428). Woolf's narrative here shows how the routine of everyday experience can give rise to the radiant and transcendent – and also to the unsettling and the new. Eleanor, if only for a moment, grasps a vague but genuine insight as she "shut[s] her hands on the coins she was holding" (426) But she cannot communicate it to others as she touches these ostensibly "solid objects," commonplace representations of value that now might conceivably melt into air. This passage is contemporaneous with Keynes's observation in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936) that an economist cannot rely only upon abstract formalization but must take into account "the complexities and

¹² Alison Light notes that Woolf's late stepsister, Stella Duckworth, had also performed such philanthropic work. But, in contrast to its effect on Eleanor Pargiter and Stella, women's charitable work could sometimes catalyze serious activism: "Some, like Marx's daughter Eleanor, were deeply radicalized. In the harsh winter of 1887, she visited a desperately poor family with eight children – 'little skeletons' – living in a cellar in Lisson Grove, the district where Stella Duckworth was to have her 'philanthropic cottages'. Eleanor thought it 'extraordinary that these people will lie down and die of hunger rather than join together and *take* what they need, and what there is abundance of. The middle classes, she thought, lived in 'mortal dread' of this. Philanthropy could never be enough for Eleanor Marx, who argued that such poverty was the inevitable byproduct of the ruthless search for profit and imperial appetite. She joined the factory and dockworkers in the call for strikes" (95).

interdependencies of the real world” (298) – ones that are foregrounded when, commanded by Martin Pargiter to “sing a song for sixpence!” (429), the caretaker’s children twist their compliance into nonsense syllables that are compelling and ominous, but also perhaps strangely “Beautiful?” (431).

“What’s very cheap?” Eleanor had asked after Delia’s reassurances (428); now, as it grows light, “Who are *they*?” Edward asks Eleanor (428). Labels and categories are brought into question across boundaries of class, but the questions can hardly be voiced. If old Pargiter servant Crosby is a sad figure, a displaced relic of the past, the sudden appearance of the caretaker’s children – “[t]he younger generation” (429) – now signals something more ominous than that aging Edwardian servant, surfacing out of her basement only to be turned out of doors. Delia tries to be welcoming to the children, but symbols and gestures cannot suffice; she is as ineffectually generous with her cake as Eleanor had been with her cottage visits. The youngsters stare at the dessert “as if they were fierce. But perhaps they were frightened” (428). Woolf catalogues the impact of their song for Martin: it is “distorted” (429), “with one impulse they attack[]” a verse (429), and the second “more fiercely than the first” (430), so that “the unintelligible words ran themselves together almost into a shriek” (430). Their voices are “so harsh” and their accent “so hideous” (430) that there is “something horrible in the noise” (430), “so shrill, so discordant, and so meaningless” (430). The company is unsettled; Eleanor does not know what to call “the whole” (431), guessing perceptively that she and Maggie may not be “thinking of the same thing” (431).

Eleanor’s succession of insights at the close of *The Years* are a far cry from the hopeful and momentarily confident narrator of *Room*, reflecting on her aunt’s legacy: “No force in the world can take from me my five hundred pounds. Food, house and clothing are mine for ever. Therefore not merely do effort and labour cease, but also hatred and

bitterness” (*Room* 38). Some of the Colonel’s children are perhaps beginning to learn from direct experience, including their observation of these less privileged children, that macroeconomic forces – and their potential political consequences – do not necessarily work this way.

The children’s song is a form that conveys emotion and confronts the audience with a kind of nonverbal primitivism. But it is not the culturally generative primitivism that had been championed in England prior to World War One by Roger Fry. Rather, Zwerdling (97) points to “a number of passages in Woolf’s fiction that render the language of the poor as nonsense: the song of the beggar woman in *Mrs. Dalloway* that is transcribed as ‘ee um fah um so / foo swee too eem oo” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 90), as well as this uncanny song in *The Years*. Whittier-Ferguson notes that the children’s song “horrifies and delights” (“Repetition, Remembering, Repetition” 245) – not exactly Sir Philip Sidney’s charge for poetry. However, these disquieting children, planning for “[n]o school tomorrow” (428), perhaps instruct their listeners in a different way.

Modris Eksteins has explored a pre-World War One “fascination with primitivism” (84) in Germany; after the war, he finds that language “was gradually robbed of its social meaning and became a highly personal and poetic instrument. The extreme example of the metamorphosis was again the phonetic and onomatopoeic ‘non-sense’ concocted by Dada.” (219) The caretaker’s children, at the close of *The Years*, recall this more unsettling sort of primitivism. They also sing and move in concert, always as a collective “they,” acting on “one impulse” (*The Years* 429). Marshaling emotion without rational language, they strike a note of fascination and warning: a generation who might in a decade or two become soldiers or rioters themselves, caught up in the collective emotions of fascist or revolutionary violence.

Although the continental linkage of artistic primitivism and mass political violence that Eksteins establishes was not replicated in Britain, in this scene, Woolf seems to cast it as a possibility. All that is certain is that Martin does not get the kind of song he carelessly thought he was paying for; the childrens' "noise" suggests that perhaps the Pargiters will be made to "pay" more in the future than cake and sixpence to those whom their class has exploited. As *The Years* concludes, the Pargiters cannot hold onto the present, and what will happen next is uncertain. And yet, as Whittier-Ferguson observes, Eleanor's final words in *The Years*, after the children have stopped singing and as the party departs into sunrise, may be vaguely hopeful: "And now? ... And now?" (435) but can be read either way ("Repetition, Remembering, Repetition" 246).

Kitty Lasswade's socioeconomic ascent to marriage in the aristocracy is unique in *The Years*, but like Eleanor's and Crosby's plot arcs, it is equally bounded by economic forces and equally anachronistic. Indeed, it is arguably emblematic of an erroneous Woolfian "model" run, a missed opportunity that privileges material excess over modern choices in both love and work. Raised as an academic's daughter, Kitty, whom Woolf depicts at the outset as playing a Katharine Hilbery-like role as hostess for college visitors, is briefly drawn to but ultimately neglects her studies (her tutor, Lucy Craddock, is based on Woolf's own mentor Janet Case), and she is also drawn to the self-made Mr. Robson's son, but soon turns her back on him to marry wealthy Lord Lasswade. The question of whether both of these would have been preferable choices for work and love is left open. But Woolf makes clear that Kitty is unhappy that she cannot own the Lasswade land, and that she prefers to spend her time traveling there alone.

Kitty's discontents amid material excess can hardly be expected to garner sympathy in comparison to Crosby's far greater suffering. Woolf represents Kitty and Crosby at two

socioeconomic extremes, as women of the aristocratic and the servant classes, both of which are rapidly on the wane in modern times. Neither character's depiction is entirely convincing, perhaps because we see very little of what propels their thoughts and choices. Crosby in particular, as Light argues, is portrayed with somewhat evasive nostalgia, since she is not a contemporary servant figure (251). Light finds Crosby a figure "of pathos, identified with the 'solid objects', the furniture she spends her life polishing, an anachronism in the modern world" (71). But both she and the Pargiters are trapped in a kind of false consciousness concerning their mutual relations. Eleanor, despite her charitable work, is belatedly "shocked to realize the darkness of the basement to which Crosby had been confined"; Crosby, 'following Eleanor about the house like a dog', reassures her: 'It was my home.'" (Light 71). Martin "feels ashamed and annoyed at his hypocritical way of patronizing her, his hearty, false manner in talking to servants. He blames 'the abominable system' of family life, the old house on six floors, for all these lies. Guilt, pity and rage are intermingled" (72).

Examining Woolf's attempts to depict working class and poor characters, Light identifies contradictory elements of "public sympathy" (203), "private recoil" (203) and "guilt" (245) in Woolf's perceptions. Concludes Light: "Although the [Crosby] scenes are set pre-war, the sophisticated analysis of the employers' feelings belongs to the hindsight of the interwar period" (72).¹³ Light also records Woolf's sometimes appalling reactions toward her own servants, for example, after one had requested a raise: "She lashed out in her diary (in

¹³ Light emphasizes, for both Woolfs, the ongoing contradictions and perhaps willful blindness that accompanied even this "sophisticated" analysis:

Virginia felt at odds with 'the pampered rich' but then equally disliked the hectoring tone of left-wing friends, whose politics she distrusted.[...] As a Stephen, Virginia had inherited a social conscience. She always felt that her fire was 'too large for one person'. She analysed her feelings in her diary: 'I'm one of those who are hampered by the psychological hindrance of owning capital,' she observed, reviewing a political discussion among her circle, where she took the Tolstoyan view that they should surrender what they owned. Leonard thought that nonsense: they should keep what they had but do 'good work' for nothing. By now he was a committed socialist... (145)

December 1917): “The poor have no chance; no manners or self-control to protect themselves with; we have a monopoly of all the generous feelings.” (142-43)

Characteristically, though, she had second thoughts, “I daresay this isn’t quite true; but there’s some meaning [in] it. Poverty degrades, as Gissing said.”

But Woolf’s critique and self-critique, when not provoked by the irritations of the moment, was sometimes structural: In 1919, “...she reflected in her diary that ‘the fault is more in the system of keeping two young women chained in the kitchen to laze & work & suck their life from two in the drawing-room than in her character or mine’” (143).¹⁴

Ultimately, for Light, Woolf’s insight into the injustices of class remains flawed and so “the figure of the servant and of the working woman haunts Woolf’s experiments in literary modernism and sets a limit to what she can achieve” (xviii). Zwerdling, too, pointing to Woolf’s inherited capital and reliance upon servants to free time for writing, argues for “her middle-class guilt” (98) and contends: “Her problem was that she could not justify the system that was liberating her” but was unwilling to give it up (99).

I think Zwerdling’s and Light’s analyses are persuasive on this point. They also call into question the sufficiency of Woolf’s prescription in *Room*, since rooms, at least those of the early decades of the past century, must be maintained by those who work for too little pay and are too often dehumanized by the sociocultural effects of class stratification. That circumstance can hardly exist without taking an interpersonal toll, including resentment on one side, whether overt or concealed, and warranted guilt on the other. Conversely, attempting to assuage guilt by giving up capital is “nonsense” according to Fabian socialist Leonard; Woolf argues in “The Leaning Tower” that it would mean at least metaphorical

¹⁴ The converse structural argument, that those who are fortunate enough to live and work as they please in the drawing-room more accurately “suck their life” from those who, compelled by economic necessity, wait in the kitchen to obey their orders, remains unvoiced in Woolf’s reflection.

“death” to the artist (CE, II, 172). Macroeconomic social change, not merely an ethically discomfiting attempt to purchase a separate peace at the cost of “five hundred a year” and a “room with a lock on the door” is thus necessary if the model in *Room* is to be fully optimized.

Crosby is displaced but not an “outsider” figure; she clings to the familiar, however oppressive, even as it recedes. It is Sara, the unsettling artist figure of *The Years*, electing to live in a squalid boardinghouse room on considerably less than “five hundred a year,” who is both a Pargiter relative and a genuine “outsider.” Froula characterizes Sara as “cryptic” and “inconsequent” (248): the first adjective is certainly apt, but the second seems too thoroughly dismissive of this partially failed artist and outsider figure. She is a variation on the earlier “Marys,” but a far more radical one, and her iteration of the model is an outlier. Woolf depicts Sara and her friend Nicholas as generating a private “outsider’s society” *à deux* in *The Years*, using language in a way that both reinforces the partners’ connection and discomfits their fellow participants in mainstream social discourse. Similar to the caretaker’s children’s song, but functioning as private communication rather than performance for an audience, this is an avant-garde refusal to engage in instrumental language-business-as-usual.¹⁵

¹⁵ For example, when North, returned to England, asks Sara about her friend Nicholas, the strangeness, but also the complexity, of their interaction is suggested:

‘I thought he was a friend of yours,’ [North] said aloud.
‘Nicholas?’ she exclaimed. ‘I love him!’
Her eyes certainly glowed. They fixed themselves upon a salt cellar with a look of rapture that made North feel once more puzzled.
‘You love him...’ he began. But here the telephone rang.
‘There he is!’ she exclaimed. ‘That’s him! That’s Nicholas!’
She spoke with extreme irritation.
The telephone rang again. ‘I’m not here!’ she said. (*The Years* 324)

Here – in sharp contrast with the socially sanctioned behavior of daughters who serve tea in *Night and Day* and *The Years*, Sara’s refusal to answer the telephone is a gesture that fits with her other obstructionist behaviors.

Sara is a saboteur, as it were, one who blurts out unexpected information but who also is capable of cutting off information flows if and when it suits her, instead of facilitating them and perpetuating a repetition of commonplace and content-free patterns of discourse. Sara's poverty also embodies resistance, for she disrupts the usual, compromised flows of economic exchange. Evelyn T. Chan has recently analyzed Sara's refusal to "prostitute" her literary talent by working professionally as a journalist; both *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, argues Chan, foreground Woolf's "conflicting feelings" about women *vis a vis* the professions: "of eagerness at seeing women become professionals and gradually realize their objectives of financial independence; of anger at having their economic progress still thwarted by men's attempts to exclude them; and of the sense of urgency to protect women's now seemingly endangered difference" (593). Maren Tova Linett (58-59) and Jonathan Freedman (56-57) have also explored this recurring trope in Woolf's oeuvre and in modernist women's writing more generally.

Despite having only a small private income, Sara/Elvira elects to live in uncomfortable circumstances rather than accept a job in a newspaper office. The material consequences (and, as Linett has shown, her anti-Semitism, itself regrettably conflating Sara's fellow boarder Abrahamson's Jewishness as a "symbol for entanglement with money" (Linett 58)) tempt but do not ultimately propel her back into the marketplace. Thus, for Chan, she "triumph[s] over the contaminated world of the professions" (600). However, in an earlier manuscript draft, Sara/Elvira is dismissed from a newspaper office "because of her lack of formal education" (600). There are contradictory energies in the Sara/Elvira scenes: part of Sara's power comes from the difficulty of locating her socially, but, ironically, this indeterminacy is also a sign of her powerlessness. The difficulty of fixing her social "place" represents a variation on the Outsider's dilemma. Access to the professions is thus figured as

problematic in *The Years*; so is lack of access. Poverty is degrading; writing for money is prostitution of culture.

The relative optimism of *Room* is lacking here; but it is also perhaps fair to assert that Woolf nowhere portrays any fully happy working woman – nor, indeed, any fully happy woman writer or artist.¹⁶ Of Woolf herself, Chan emphasizes: “where Elvira/Sara renounces journalism altogether, Woolf’s life as a professional writer shows continuing tensions between individual creativity and freedom on the one hand, and journalistic writing for more immediate financial rewards on the other” (601). Latham, also underscoring these tensions, finds that following her own achievement of literary recognition, Woolf develops a metaphor of an “intellectual aristocracy” (90), one that she explores in particular depth in *Orlando* but that echoes throughout her later oeuvre and raises new problems even as it attempts to solve persisting ones. This yields a “vision of utopian autonomy” (96), but ironically “in trying to produce a space for art, she entangles herself in an aristocratic metaphor that invokes the very logic of snobbish performance she seeks to escape” (94). More recently, Jeanne Dubino has considered this conflict, observing that “the marketplace makes its appearance one way or another in most of Woolf’s writings” (9).

Orlando as an artist, like Sara but from the opposite end of the socioeconomic scale, resists commodification by the literary marketplace, rejecting its manipulations – but also failing to produce art for rather sustained periods of time. *Orlando* as a novel is usually read in conjunction with *Room*, in part because Woolf drafted them contemporaneously, and

¹⁶ Lily Briscoe comes closest in *To the Lighthouse*, but her “vision” is necessarily transient, she often feels herself socially superfluous, and her painting, in its moment of completion, lacks an audience. None of this detracts from her real achievement, but it is not an uncomplicated one. Professional men, too, are often less than content in Woolf’s oeuvre – in *To the Lighthouse*, for example, Mr. Tansley is hungry to achieve what Mr. Ramsay has accomplished, but Mr. Ramsay remains perpetually worried about his exact ranking in his profession and his comfortable but not extravagant financial circumstances. All of this has domestic consequences, since Mrs. Ramsay must frequently reassure her husband of his importance and she must minimize other worries, “not able to tell [Mr. Ramsay] the truth, being afraid, for instance, about the greenhouse roof and the expense it would be, fifty pounds perhaps, to mend it” (65).

importantly because of their concurrent feminist theme. But in one respect they differ, for the polemic directed toward middle to upper-middle-class women writers and the fantasy woven around a Vita-esque aristocrat do not exactly offer comparable economic models. If Sara and some of the Marys of *Room* and *Night and Day* have too little (their struggle is valorized but somewhat degrading), the more privileged Mary Carmichael is warned in *Room* that she will be impeded by class barriers, and perhaps Orlando and Kitty, even more privileged than this, are impeded by that very excess, as well as by misogynistic barriers, from focusing in a sustained way on doing serious literary or intellectual work. Woolf raises but never really resolves this question: in the first decade of her career, given her feminist, familial and professional context, she is both excited by her power to make money from writing but also such a child of her family, era and aesthetic principles that she sees getting paid for writing (especially reviewing – notwithstanding that it has cultural influence) as a sordid and sullyng occupation. Poverty is always degrading in Woolf but, as Latham emphasizes, there is also a kind of cheapening of culture that is middlebrow and that comes too easily (96). Her texts reveal complicated and divided ideas about these issues. Woolf is representing a modern context where women are becoming earners in one way; at the same time, her art depicts them as being worried about, reacting to and complicit with various kinds of commodification.

Commodification, recognition, and rewards from established hierarchies are strongly critiqued in *Three Guineas*, but we should not lose sight of how this recognition, for all that Woolf becomes increasingly wary of it, facilitates her ability to get her ideas into public circulation and taken seriously. Literally, it gives her privileged access to the “marketplace of ideas,” to borrow John Stuart Mill’s phrase, a marketplace in which society can be shaped and changed, but from which outsiders such as Sara have excluded themselves. This is also a

marketplace in which the Outsiders' pamphlets are likely to be overlooked or more freely mocked by the resistant because they do not come accompanied by the (admittedly problematic) trappings of sanctioned cultural capital.

Indeed, in *Three Guineas*, without prescriptive didacticism, Sara's and Nicholas's communicative pattern is writ large, for all its radicalism and for all its potential failure to be understood. Woolf envisions here an "anonymous and secret Society of Outsiders" (130) that will use the printing press in radical pamphleteering experiments to "[f]ind out new ways of approaching the public" (117), to promote "justice and equality and liberty for all men and women" (125). It is both a potential strength and a potential weakness that, in contrast to the Colonel Pargiter "type" of patriarch, they will be anonymous, non-hierarchical and non-didactic, acting as catalysts for change.

Repetitions of allusions and motifs, of characters and actions, interweave and connect *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. In the latter, economics is an overarching and central concern. The title of *Three Guineas* is indicative; it conflates class distinction with charity, patronage and a problematizing of the historical (and sexist) status quo. Both the domestic and the professional economy are called into question; they are two extremes that co-operate to further hierarchy, alienation and the repetition of violence and war. Moreover, the specific publishing techniques that Woolf advocates in *Three Guineas*, with small-scale pamphleteering and politically grounded rhetorical interventions in the marketplace of ideas, bear some resemblances to her publishing work with Leonard Woolf, as joint proprietors of the Hogarth Press (the Hogarth Press's texts were not, of course, anonymous, and its distribution processes were less radical in methodology).

In the course of drafting *Three Guineas*, Woolf consulted with Leonard Woolf regarding how best to make antifascist arguments. According to Naomi Black, he

helpfully explained to her that she would have to take account of 'the economic question.' This was the standard leftist approach; Leonard Woolf himself relied more on psychologically based arguments in his own books about fascism. Virginia reflected that 'his specialised knowledge is of course an immense gain, if I could use it & stand away' (Black 65).

This last observation is particularly interesting, perhaps hinting at the kind of cooperative political partnership between men and women, both seeking to prevent war in different ways, that Woolf explores in *Three Guineas*, as well as her transition toward a literary aesthetic of impersonality – another form of “standing away” – in her late modernist works. She does in fact foreground “the economic question,” but she also “stand[s] away” from the less radical rhetorical modes that Leonard Woolf and Keynes use for their own contemporaneous advocacy. In addition, rather as she considers two hundred years’ of poor male poets’ exclusion in *Room*, Woolf’s polemical analysis in the “one book,” both remains strongly grounded in feminism yet extends to some degree to encompass men.

This is highlighted especially in draft manuscripts for *The Years*, where, as Chan characterizes North’s dilemma upon returning to England, he is afraid of being forced into becoming “a well-off, well-fed, well-attired man in a professional position that maps his life out for him and robs him of his agency” (Chan 607). Whittier-Ferguson underscores North’s importance as “Woolf’s last portrait of a soldier from the Great War” (“Repetition, Remembering, Repetition” 240). Chan transcribes a “typical” exchange between North and Maggie, who advises him to stay out of the professions (North is called George in the holograph version):

George/North boils the topic down to a question of money: ‘But one has to make one’s living my dear aunt’ said George. And in a typical response, Maggie answers the question with further questions that themselves remain unanswered: ‘How much does one want to live on? What is worth living? Where

does living cease? Where does it begin?' (*The Years*: Holograph, vol. vii, 95). (Chan 608)

Isa Oliver will seem to juxtapose opposites when, in *Between the Acts*, she hides poetry in her account book, but Maggie in a draft of *The Years* insists to George/North that budgeting can be creative, too, if it sustains a new way of living: “[]We are creating,’ said Maggie. ‘Well, by living on one thousand a year instead of two. Well by saying What do I want to live on. This – she took the budget in her hand – is very creative.’” (*The Years*, Holograph, vol. vii, 93).

Sara/Elvira and Eleanor, too, have a part in this exchange (*The Years*, Holograph, vol. vii, 93) – each of the three women, in different ways as their character arcs play out in *The Years*, seeming to work experimentally, with varying degrees of success and failure, toward an alternative to the narrowing professional fate that George/North also desires to avoid, and here, coming together to speak of the issue in common.

Peggy, on the other hand, feels trapped by her profession to the forced exclusion of all else: “merely a doctor” (*The Years* 259). In holograph, as Chan notes (609), Peggy calls for change in words that strongly evoke *Three Guineas*. But, interestingly, Peggy envisions this intervention less in terms of “leaving” the professions as in making them more interdisciplinary:

Why dont we get together, Eleanor – we young women, we working, professional women -- & say, By God, we wont have it. We'll break down the professions. We wont take honours. We wont make money. We'll make a new society – a civilized society – a society where you've got to mix all the professions – not excel in one. Thats the only way you can learn anything about medicine – by learning about economics...art. (*The Years*, Holograph, vol. vii, 111)

In this draft, Woolf portrays interdisciplinarity, at least in passing, as a way toward “civilization” and toward facilitating better knowledge in the professions themselves.

Leaving aside the injunction not to “excel,” Peggy’s rhetoric certainly calls to mind

Bloomsbury's practice; it encompasses economics and art as valuable pursuits in themselves and also as valuable for the lens they can offer to those engaged in other fields of endeavor.

As Chan notes (611), Woolf seems at first glance to have given rather contradictory advice to Vanessa Bell's son Julian – advice he did not take. Woolf's May 1937 diary entry records: "But I wanted you to go to the Bar, I said. Yes, but you didn't insist upon it to my mother, he remarked, rather forcibly. He now finds himself at 29 without any special training." (*Diary*, vol v, 86). That the author who portrays Ralph Denham's escape from misery and boredom in the law to valorized if slightly mockable literary pursuits in *Night and Day* would advise her own young nephew to capitulate to the former seems a little perplexing. But perhaps this is an instance of Bloomsbury pragmatism: Woolf's brother Adrian Stephen, Leonard Woolf and Keynes had all, in fact, enacted the pattern that Woolf advises women of her class to follow in *Three Guineas*, leaving an unsatisfactory (first) profession when they no longer "needed" it. Perhaps Woolf modeled a path for the "daughters of educated men," in part, on her observations of the actual "experiments and reforms" of Old Bloomsbury's career men? Indeed, although it would have brought no glory and might have been difficult to defend amid the then-prevalent "moral certitude"¹⁷ of 1930s Cambridge, had Julian followed his aunt's advice, at least for a few years, his untimely death in the anti-fascist cause might have been forestalled.

We may fairly critique the political prescriptions set forth in *Three Guineas* as somewhat vague, even as Sara's artistry in *The Years* is somewhat unrealized and her communication with Nicholas is not only repetitive but fragmentary. But Woolf's program

¹⁷ I am indebted to Alan M. Wald for his use of this phrase to characterize the Cold War anti-fascist left in the United States. ("Late Anti-Fascism: Moral Certainty and the Cold War Cultural Left." Rackham Amphitheater, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. 13 Sept. 2011.) To some degree, and in contrast to marked similarities in Keynes's, Leonard Woolf's and Virginia Woolf's political and rhetorical approaches despite their sometimes differing substantive views, such "moral certitude" seems also to characterize a number of Bloomsbury's younger generation, as well as the 1930s writers whom Woolf addresses in "The Leaning Tower" and whom John Lehmann had some success in bringing to the Hogarth Press.

in the “one book” is not aspiring to the facile clarity, but also the fixed identifications and stratified power relations, of traditionally understood collective action. There is an obvious problem associated with this avant-garde approach, for without a leader to order a course of action, nothing may get done; an idealistic “advance guard,” in its wishes to avoid imitating the guards of a literal army, may do little more than mill around in disorganization and discord.

From an economic standpoint, Woolf’s program in *Three Guineas* also raises questions about how successful the pamphleteers and profession-leavers can really be. Self-willed exclusion from the “marketplace of ideas” limits an artist’s or intellectual’s ability to act as a cultural change agent. If, like Woolf, it is a partial and belated self-exclusion from the public stage, that is something different: a kind of activist performance, drawing upon already-won cultural capital and already-established networks for the dissemination of ideas. This is potentially an innovative and effective gesture, but, precisely because it will be noticed by and generate discussion among a substantial audience, it is not quite the same thing as Sara’s self-abnegation.¹⁸

Sara’s artistic and economic model in *The Years*, resembling the Outsiders’ extreme iteration in *Three Guineas* – one that Woolf herself approached at times in the last decade of

¹⁸ An encounter with Forster at the London Library illustrates the potential problem, as well as their different positions on the issue of gender exclusion from hierarchical honors in the 1930s, while Woolf was writing *Three Guineas*. Forster, who was on the board of the London Library (as Sir Leslie Stephen had been, Zwerdling 243) revealed to Woolf, inciting her fury, that her name had been proposed but rejected because she was a woman: “I thought how perhaps M[organ] had mentioned my name & they had said no no no: ladies are impossible. And so I quieted down & said nothing [...] God damn Morgan for thinking I’d have taken that....For 2,000 years we have done things without being paid for doing them. You can’t bribe me now.” (D, IV, 297-98). She eventually transmutes her anger into polemic, but hierarchical honors can be more than bribes; members of the board of a major library might have had, or might at least have tried to claim, some degree of agency in shaping and changing cultural discourse – as might “prostituted” book reviewers, if the leverage of a Bloomsbury name allowed them to find ways to exert effective control over the content of their work. There are perhaps difficulties with valorizing exclusion-as-refusal in such a sweeping way as Woolf does here, impelled by the anger of the moment in a diary entry, yet keeping it from Forster to avoid conflict within the group.

her life but never quite wholly followed – opens up possibility and risk, recognizing that literary labor might have to be done without less of a material basis than *Room* had urged, and in an atmosphere of even more radical experimentation, because, in the given moment of crisis, there is a sense that nothing else will work. In the 1930s, assimilating aspects of Keynes’s new economic theories, Woolf insists in *Three Guineas* that there is a need for an even more extensive socioeconomic paradigm shift. Her process, moving from hierarchical to decentralized, from over-analytical rationalism to the usefully vague, is necessarily modernist and modernizing. But, insisting upon utterly undoing hierarchy, it becomes almost absolutist in itself, in a gesture that bespeaks political desperation.¹⁹

“That the artist is interested in politics needs no saying,” Woolf acknowledges in her late essay (“The Artist and Politics” 230). Under conditions of imminent peril, that interest must extend to overt involvement; the artist “is forced to take part in politics” (232). With the munitions of the Second World War about to ravage England, Woolf extends her exploration of these themes in her final texts, thereby implicitly ratifying her work on the “one book” of the 1930s as both “deliberate” and necessary. Seen from this slightly later temporal perspective, *The Years* and *Three Guineas* embody an innovative, late-modern aesthetic, an effort to respond presciently and courageously to appalling historical

¹⁹ Still, Andrew John Miller cautions usefully (34): “If we look to *Three Guineas* for a definitive expression of Woolf’s underlying ideological assumptions, we are liable to fall prey to a perspective that, in Alex Zwerdling’s words, ‘plays down the importance of [Woolf’s] divided motives and turns her into a more consistently militant, self-righteous polemical writer than she was’ (Zwerdling 33). Miller points to Woolf’s increasing concern with what he characterizes as “the rage for authoritarian order” (39), which – here he gestures toward two of Leonard Woolf’s more didactic Fabian socialist political colleagues, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, whom Virginia regarded with considerably less enthusiasm – “was not confined to fascists but was also characteristic of many of those who depicted themselves as progressives” (39). As Miller reminds us, “similar tendencies can be discerned in the modernist desire for formal mastery” (39). John Whittier-Ferguson finds that “[i]n the text and notes of *Three Guineas* we see particular truths and Truth itself evade all attempts at control. And we see Woolf rejoicing, with less ambivalence than at any other point in her career, at the formal and political consequences of this confusion, this instability, this unruliness” (*Designs of the Gloss* 91). It is a deliberate and generative vagueness – but one that, I think, is sometimes on the verge of becoming paradoxically a little too certain, too fixed, in its rejection of *all* pragmatic and strategic sociopolitical “truths.”

circumstance. Woolf's literary work in the 1930s, as exemplified by the genetic development and rhetorical strategies of *The Pargiters* and its daughter narratives, constitutes radical political, economic and sociocultural advocacy, and perhaps a remaking of Bloomsbury's own "avant-garde."

III. The Impossibility of Economic Modeling

Granted, the impression of Bloomsbury that these "experiments" and examples create is somewhat contradictory for purposes of an economic and class analysis. Of Virginia Woolf's two "manifestos," *A Room of One's Own* performed significant cultural work on behalf of feminism, but its greatest beneficiaries were already somewhat-privileged white women; *Three Guineas*, even more radical, accomplished less. The Hogarth Press's artistically innovative and diverse publications list won a significant readership and performed notable cultural interventions in the context of British modernism, but can also be characterized largely in terms of the "highbrow." Nonetheless, Bloomsbury's experiments in economic modeling show a continuing, but usually not naïve, line of modernist utopianism.

Bloomsbury does not ignore economic realities. Nor does it obsess about them in either a Freudian or no-holds-barred free market capitalistic sense. Rather, and with considerable pragmatism, it subordinates economics (and money itself) as a tool to foster the good life, not as an end in itself. As exemplified in Woolf's writings, Bloomsbury examines and critiques contemporaneous structures of socioeconomic and political experience, taking them as both a means of and a substrate for modernist literary experimentation and cultural intervention.

Woolf's multifaceted representations of economics in prose, developing in the interdisciplinary context of Bloomsbury, are analogous to a "fuzzy," modernist

Wittgensteinian and Keynesian linguistic and economic model – one that is impossible to construct with any sense of finality or resolution, but one that is paradoxically more accurate in representing the empirical conditions of the “real world” than more reductionist precision could yield. If the foregoing analysis, from Woolf’s quasi-Edwardian “novel of fact” to her 1930s revisiting of that sub-genre, and across both book-length feminist economic polemics, seems tangled, that is necessarily so, for Woolf is obsessively trying to write her way out of or into an understanding of the modernist’s relationship with money, class, gender, value, and, ultimately, competing formulations of the “good life,” in both its private and public manifestations, in the complex and changing context of modernity.

Woolf, who thinks Moore is too certain about his privately-focused and comfortably class-delimited model of culture, attempts to move beyond the Edwardian precepts of the *Principia* as she undertakes linguistic and economic explorations in a modern Bloomsbury milieu that, between the wars, has come to recognize the pervasiveness of irreducible vagueness and uncertainty. Woolf herself does not ever quite leave Moore and the Edwardians behind; she does not depart from material “fact” entirely, yet she delves below surface detail and blurs its potential for exact and conclusive fixity in modernist and usefully indeterminate ways. She remains a snob; sometimes she deplores being a snob; sometimes she writes herself into a contingent recognition of the need for macroeconomic and sociocultural change that might render at least the more unattractive and exploitative attributes of the snob extinct. As she reflects upon class, she is mired repeatedly in complexity and contradictions, but one thing is clear from her writings on the subject: the status quo is problematic not only for the lower and middle classes, but even for many who are more economically and socially privileged, and certainly for those of all classes who are artists and intellectuals. Her characters, trying to think in class-based terms, tend to end up

more confused about what they are trying to do than can be easily summarized. But this paradoxically opens up potentials for modernist vagueness and reduces the probability of over-simplification and error, while allowing for complex examination, speculation and exploration concerning possible ways and means for bringing about change.

Some “runs” of the prevailing British economic model are, for Woolf, clearly “failed experiments.” In *Night and Day*, Katharine Hilbery’s production of six hundred teas’ worth of repetitive domesticity to the exclusion of all else, and Ralph Denham’s decade’s worth of drawing up deeds to the exclusion of all else, are surely, at least for them as particular individuals, two of these. (Cassandra might not mind the former; Mr. Tansley in *To the Lighthouse* might prefer the latter.) William Rodney’s stuckness in literary repetition and Mrs. Hilbery’s even less productive biographical inertia in a room filled with the material weight of the past are two more failed iterations. The runs that seem to promise better outcomes tend to have vaguer parameters. Ultimately there is no static Marshallian model in Woolf’s experimentation that can suffice to underwrite a “good life” in modern times: 500 pounds a year and a “room” of one’s own is a start for the woman writer, but neither of those variables is as static as it might seem at first glance, and as long as there are problems surrounding commodification of the writer’s work and class exploitation of those who must maintain the everyday life in those rooms, even this version of a Woolfian economic model cannot be optimized. Self-exile, with less coin and a rented boardinghouse room, is not comfortable either, nor is an artist who chooses or is forced into such circumstances likely to win a comprehending, far less approving, audience, as Sara’s difficult position in *The Years* demonstrates.

By analyzing Woolf’s work of the late 1930s, we come to realize that a greater degree of social and macroeconomic justice will be necessary before women artists will be able to

resolve their individual “microeconomic” challenges to a genuinely acceptable degree, not only in terms of funds accounted for and rooms furnished but in terms of a genuinely optimal quality of life, in communities of individuals who will not have to exploit others, both directly and indirectly, to sustain this. That awareness is grounds for finding in Woolf’s *oeuvre* not only intermittent “snobbery” but increasingly sustained recognition of the need for larger-scale socioeconomic change – change that can best be brought about iteratively, experimentally, without absolutist certainty as to details of the most workable means. Under the prevailing conditions of British capitalism, Woolf’s model could be experimented with in certain ways and arguably *was*, but the more utopian aspects cannot be optimized in the real world without progressive and macro-level (and, consistent with Bloomsbury’s political paradigm, democratic) cultural change.

Not despite but because of the inexactness of Woolf’s literary and economic modeling, future women writers can still “stand roughly here,” in the admittedly inchoate and metaphorical space of Woolf’s “room,” which is both translatable into a plethora of viable work spaces and which excludes other spaces in which artistic labor is unduly interfered with, using the vaguely bounded but simultaneously quite concrete material resources that Woolf prescribes – not too little, not too much – to open up a greater potential to create more literature, more unalienated art and craft, more freely, than their present culture might otherwise encourage. Such intellectual and artistic work and its products, experimental, evincing varying degrees of success and failure, have in turn some genuine potential to change that culture, where “culture” is broadly defined, borrowing Raymond Williams’s term, as “a whole way of life.”²⁰ Mary Datchet and all of the Marys in

²⁰ This conception of Bloomsbury’s cultural and economic project is potentially, but not exclusively, congruent with Williams’s Marxist perspective. Whether Williams’s definition of culture is tested in terms of Bloomsbury’s liberalism (as exemplified by Keynes) or Bloomsbury’s socialism (as exemplified by Leonard Woolf), his

Room can attempt this; Katharine Hilbery perhaps also moves toward the potential to do this; so too does Ralph Denham and possibly (especially as he listens to his female relatives) North Pargiter. Consideration of Woolf's texts, instantiating such cultural work and change themselves over decades, shows how important it is to Woolf that all of these assorted characters, these hypothetical iterative variables in her Bloomsbury model runs, should be able to try to move toward this kind of work, as a valuable goal in itself and a sustainable component of the "good life."

observation in *The Long Revolution* that a "‘pattern of culture’ is a selection and configuration of interests and activities, and a particular valuation of them, producing a distinct organization, a ‘way of life’" (47) foregrounds but does not over-privilege a material and economic basis for such culture, putting questions of valuation front and center in a manner that avoids fixed analytical certainty and fosters the possibility of socioeconomic and artistic change. Williams notes, while initially defining his term in "Culture is Ordinary": "a culture is a whole way of life and the arts are part of a social organisation which economic change clearly radically affects." Bloomsbury's history evidences both how economics and politics affected the work of its artists and thinkers, and how that work in turn played an iterative role in reshaping modern Anglo-American economic policy and modernist literature and art.

Chapter Three

“Upon Money as Upon Islands”: E. M. Forster and the Cultural Economics of Liberalism

Margaret Schlegel’s exhortation in E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910) to “Only connect!” too easily elides the debt owing to Britain’s colonies when the wealth of Empire furnishes the Chelsea rooms of Schlegels and Wilcoxes. *Howards End* is full of such modernist “duplicities,” as Fredric Jameson has emphasized (52). Building upon Jameson’s insights, Chapter Three argues for commonalities between Keynes and Forster, foregrounding similar rhetorical and philosophical approaches to economic valuation and “modeling,” a quarter-century apart, in *Howards End* and *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), on the part of these two Bloomsbury liberals.¹

Forster, as Brian May has noted, pragmatically critiques the extremes of Victorian liberalism as well as modernist aestheticism. Joining the debate early, before World War One, Forster develops his sociocultural and economic views over time as a participant in the evolution of what Christine Froula has characterized as Bloomsbury’s *sensus communis*. But there is also a common, utopian and even elegiac or renunciatory note in Keynes’s, Forster’s and Virginia Woolf’s writings, each looking toward a later generation for full realization of the “good life.”

¹ Keynes and Leonard Woolf are most often considered to be among the core members of “Old Bloomsbury”; Forster, like Keynes a liberal, is situated somewhat further toward the group’s periphery.

Even as Forster thinks in 1910 that Wilcoxian facts, focusing on the precise enumeration of material things, must be paired with Schlegelian “vagueness” and its potentially generative focus on the bigger picture, Keynes by the 1930s will insist upon on the importance of switching between vagueness and formalization in the development of the *General Theory*. For both Forster’s conception of this binary model in *Howards End* and Keynes’s formulation in his 1933 lectures and in the *General Theory* itself, Bloomsbury’s use of indeterminacy and vagueness is paired with the specific and concrete as needed, to chart a course toward the realization of Bloomsbury’s liberal project.

Reading *A Passage to India* (1924) from the perspective of economic anthropology and linguistic indeterminacy also reveals Forster’s partial yet significant shift after *Howards End* toward recognition of a political and ethical debt that is literally unforgivable. Reflecting a progression in Forster’s positioning with respect to imperialism between these two works (one that begins with his personal experiences during work and travels in Alexandria and India), in *Passage*, the political and economic realities of British imperialism destroy the prospect of genuine connection and equal exchange between Cyril Fielding and Dr. Aziz, emphasizing damages that can no longer be ignored. The Muslim physician’s “forgiveness,” far from zeroing out the balance sheet and closing the book on a trial where there could be no uncoerced meeting of the minds between English, Hindus and Muslims, instead powerfully calls into question the legitimacy of Britain’s claim to rule in India. Consonant with Bloomsbury’s experimental “modeling” methodology, this shift continues after *Passage*, as Forster turns almost exclusively toward non-fictional prose genres, including not only the written word but the modern radio broadcast.

Part I of this chapter explores how indeterminacy becomes not potentially generative but ethically problematic when a Schlegel neglects to give a hard look at the tokens of

imperialist plunder on the walls of a Wilcox room. Forsterian narrative reasonableness, like Schlegelian “vagueness,” is susceptible here to a counter-reading. Part II addresses Forster’s and Leonard Woolf’s literary responses to the costs and consequences of colonial imperialism (a subject upon which both men, unlike Keynes, had years of direct and often disturbing personal experience). Both *Passage* and *The Village in the Jungle* (1913) mark, for Forster as a liberal and Woolf as a Fabian socialist, a highly effective literary implementation of the Bloomsbury modeling method in the context of colonialism. But also, perhaps in part acknowledging its insufficiency to fully address pressing issues raised by Britain’s colonial wrongs, these texts signal each writer’s subsequent turn toward nonfictional genres. Part III analyzes the liberal rhetoric of selected Forster essays and radio broadcasts. By the 1930s, decades after *Howards End*, Forster’s use of Bloomsbury’s empirical method manifests itself persuasively as a “model” for sociopolitical engagement.

I. *Howards End* and *The General Theory*: Modeling Bloomsbury’s Liberalism and Economics

Howards End contrasts the Schlegel sisters, who are modeled on Bloomsbury precedents, with the Wilcoxes, who are materialistic to the exclusion of all else. In Forsterian terms, the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels, each enjoying a relative degree of economic privilege, mis-value their circumstances in diametrically opposed but equally erroneous ways. Their narratives suggest two flawed economic valuation models, each too greatly abstracted from empirical reality and each with destructive potential as a result. It hardly avails if that potential is sometimes accompanied by good intentions, as with the Schlegel “gifts” that, manifesting a different “value” than the sisters intended, propel Leonard Bast to his doom. However, Margaret, reflecting upon Henry Wilcox’s traits, recognizes the imperative to

“Only connect!” their respective strengths (174-75). She thus models metonymically the Bloomsbury method of linking vagueness and precision, uncertainty and material fact, decades before Wittgenstein would insist that vagueness, as an essential attribute of language, does not detract from its usefulness.

Movement toward open-endedness is generally characteristic of modernism, and in the case of *Howards End*, the uncertainties and potential contradictions that the reader cannot help but discern, and which contrast with the novel’s insistently reasonable but none-too-reliable narrative tone, have invited critique as much as valorization. Jameson highlights the “traps and false leads” (52) that correspond with Forster’s “amiable simplicity” (52). He finds Forster to be “at best a closet modernist” (54) – a persuasive assessment of *Howards End*, although I think it is less so for both *Passage* and Forster’s prose of the 1930s and 1940s. For Jameson, Forster’s stylistic perplexities in *Howards End*, and the vaguenesses of modernist literary style more generally, signal an imperialism that, from the vantage point of metropolitan London, can neither be seen nor mapped representationally: “It is Empire which stretches the roads out to infinity, beyond the bounds and borders of the national state” (57). This is a powerful argument, which Jed Esty has subsequently sought to extend to encompass both Keynes (Esty 170)² and Forster’s later work in *Passage* (Esty 28, 78-79).³

These claims are compelling and provocative. On the other hand, both Forster and Keynes weave rhetorical threads, testing them experientially, using vagueness not only unconsciously but deliberately to illuminate problematic socioeconomic and political

² Esty posits with respect to Keynes: “Jameson argues that modernist texts reflect this state of affairs by gesturing imagistically toward a frightening and unrepresentable spatial infinity, one that is symbolically associated with empire. This suggestive account of the relations between macroeconomic conditions (imperial capitalism) and aesthetic form (modernist style) becomes more concrete when we recover Keynes as a mediating figure for English modernism. Keynes not only theorized the economy, but -- like Forster, Woolf, and Eliot -- made artful language out of the cognitive maze of the metropole” (170).

³ In “Modernism and Imperialism,” Jameson devotes only a tangential footnote to *Passage* (65 n.11).

realities. What Esty, troping Jameson, calls the “gray, open-ended placelessness of infinity” (27) can be set not only metaphorically but literally against Keynesian “grey, fuzzy” modeling methods, which reduce “infinity” -- or at least the global confusions of macroeconomic complexity -- to pragmatically accessible equations that can be tested and applied toward progressive intervention in the real world. Bloomsbury’s iterative modeling method carries with it real potential to recognize, name and change the status quo of imperialism.⁴

Some critics find such engagement already at least faintly legible in *Howards End*, while others are more wary. Most have generally accepted the central question of *Howards End* as that of “Who will inherit England?”⁵ The question is posed directly by Forster’s narrator in Chapter 19, asking whether England “belong[s]” (163) to the Wilcoxian line that has literally “moulded her and made her feared by other lands” (163) or to the Schlegelian one that has lyrically and metaphorically “seen the whole island at once” (163). However, despite these larger stakes, the narrative focus of the novel is much more domestic and private than public and political. Forster’s admitted subject in *Howards End* is limited to the English middle class, ranging from the lower to upper divisions of that class. This necessarily limits the scope of Forster’s examination of sociocultural and economic values in *Howards End*. As Jameson establishes, pre-World War One England is only fleetingly situated in the context of economic imperialism, which makes any political and economic pronouncements by Schlegels or Wilcoxes hopelessly incomplete if not willfully blind; on the other hand, Forster’s examination of Edwardian-era class positioning and potential class mobility in

⁴ Esty acknowledges that “Keynes recognized the gathering imperial twilight. By the 1930s, he was convinced that India (and other colonies) were evolving rapidly toward modernized and independent status -- a process he thought it futile to resist” (266 n. 10). Esty also observes that Leonard Woolf “pits real experience against ‘false ideas’ of empire” (110).

⁵ Elizabeth Outka has recently underscored these sociocultural stakes for the novel (76): “A central question for the characters – Who will inherit Howards End – reflects, as Trilling famously observed, the larger question, ‘Who shall inherit England?’” (Trilling, *E. M. Forster* 118).

England itself is circumscribed by his neglecting to consider any character who is poorer than a clerk and his fiancée.

Forster's framing of class in *Howards End* is perhaps most overtly problematic with respect to Forster's characterization of Leonard Bast, who is a casual and accidental victim of Schlegels and Wilcoxes and almost equally casual and accidental father of *Howards End*'s inheritor-to-be, Helen Schlegel's infant son. Andrea Zengulys, situating Schlegels and Wilcoxes not only as ideological binaries but as parallel in class, notes (117) "the novel's theme of money as the very 'warp' of civilization" (*Howards End* 136). Elizabeth Outka analyzes the class markers that Forster's narrator emphasizes in contrasting descriptions of the Bast and Wilcox houses and *Howards End* (73-76): "the cheap flat of Leonard Bast and his fiancée, Jacky, the novel's lower-middle-class characters, and the sumptuous London home of the wealthy Wilcoxes represent two socioeconomic ends of the same suspect market" (73). Jonathan Rose critiques Forster's characterization of Leonard powerfully in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, arguing that Forster, with willful nostalgia for country over city, ignores the increasing access to education that Edwardian-era clerks like Leonard would have been able to take advantage of in modernizing London. Stuart Christie finds Leonard to be "[a] flawed figure of nascent upward mobility" (*Worlding Forster* 25), who "is punished because his honest desire for self-improvement may still, in certain segments of Forster's society, be considered class presumptuousness" (25).⁶ But Melba Cuddy-Keane, *contra* Rose, finds Forster's presentation of Leonard's aspirations to be more positive, based on Forster's own experience of teaching for over two decades at the Working Men's College (Cuddy-Keane 82). Margaret Schlegel's desire for Leonard to "wash out his brain" is not,

⁶ Moreover, the prospect of class mobility, for Leonard, shows a note of disquieting nostalgia on Forster's part. Notes Outka, "as the narrator nostalgically and patronizingly observes, he would be far better off in the country" (74).

according to Cuddy-Keane, a wish to “brain-wash” the clerk, as Rose reads it (Rose 402), but rather a hope that Leonard might be enabled to critique the sub-par education that was available to him, in order to rid himself of Edwardian-era “platitudinous attitudes...and to learn to think of himself” (Cuddy-Keane 5).

There is a further difficulty when, as Forster’s narrator provides early backstory on Leonard and his circumstances – the character himself having just “fled” (39) from a Chelsea scene, after recovery of his accidentally pilfered umbrella from the Schlegel sisters – that not entirely reliable narrative voice observes: “We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet” (43). Frank Kermode finds an “easy irony” (98) in these two sentences; that is, of course, not the only way to read them. There is clearer irony in the sentence that follows: “This story deals with gentlefolk, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentlefolk” (43). Randall Stevenson acknowledges that the novel “highlights disastrous disconnections inherent in the English class system, but treats patronizingly or implausibly characters from outside the middle class” (219). David Bradshaw also emphasizes Forster’s “unease with Leonard” (*Cambridge Companion* 158), manifested in the narrator’s pejorative descriptions that at times convey “obvious distaste” (157) for the doomed clerk and, even worse, for his fiancée Jacky, “contemptuous superiority” (159).⁷

It is important to note that such readings largely do not credit the more positive and adventurous aspects of Forster’s experimental, humanist liberalism, which is central to his *oeuvre*. Moreover, Forster does draw a significant character arc for Leonard Bast, from initial optimism to bitter renunciation of his early appetite for culture, from Schlegelian openness

⁷ Although Jacky tends to be cast in the most prejudicial light in the novel based on both the portrayal of her Edwardian-era gender roles and her disadvantaged class positioning, Bradshaw also observes the narrator’s more generalized tendency to patronize the middle-class female characters of *Howards End* too, including even Margaret (159-60).

to new experience to Wilcoxian hard-headedness. In this, Leonard may be portrayed as discomfitingly puppet-like, but he is hardly a static caricature. Leonard concludes that his experiments have proven too risky. After leaving his job at the Porphyryon insurance company thanks to a mistaken tip from Henry Wilcox, only to lose his new position at a bank, Leonard, who once “hoped to come to Culture suddenly” (47), tells Margaret with fixed certainty: “if a man over twenty once loses his particular job, it’s all over with him” (211). Unlike “rich people” (210), he now realizes that he cannot afford even a single failure in his work life. And so, indicting the sisters’ accounting of artistic and philanthropic value, he sums up his own subjective valuation: “Poetry’s nothing, Miss Schlegel. One’s thoughts about this or that are nothing. Your money, too, is nothing, if you’ll understand me” (210-11). Charity cannot repair the damage, proclaims Leonard: “I have seen it happen to others. Their friends give them money for a little, but in the end they fall over the edge. It’s no good. It’s the whole world pulling. There always will be rich and poor” (211). Is Leonard’s world, lacking any safe margin of error and defined by that one cold fact, thus necessarily more like a Wilcoxian than a Schlegelian paradigm? Perhaps the Schlegels cannot examine this circumstance too closely, lest their own bohemian generosity be called into question?⁸

Of course, a different possibility remains open at the novel’s conclusion for the new residents of Howards End, raising a scion of the next generation who will conflate Schlegel and Wilcox sociocultural influences and Schlegel and Bast parentage. But Leonard’s speech of disillusionment accomplishes two things. It confronts Margaret with the first of two disillusionments of her own, namely, that the subjective intent behind generosity does not

⁸ Although by this point, two thirds into the novel, not only the Schlegels but Henry Wilcox are implicated in the clerk’s financial ruin, and both families will be implicated in his death, Bradshaw convincingly places the greatest accountability for the Basts’ catastrophe upon Helen Schlegel: “Above all, the main blame for Leonard’s death (as well as Jacky’s off-stage but inevitable plunge into destitution) may be laid squarely at the feet of ... Helen. She and Leonard first meet because she absent-mindedly walks off with his broly” (156); the Schlegels, argues Bradshaw, may be “simply careless and self-centred” (156) – and they are far from free of class prejudice of their own, especially toward Jacky (156-57).

guarantee either the subjectively felt or objectively pragmatic “worth” of the gift to the recipient. What counts as a “gift” in the metaphorical Schlegel-Wilcox ledger of values may operate as a cost for Leonard and Jacky; a slight or careless gesture of philanthropy on the one hand, an all-encompassing “taking” on the other. The second disillusionment, following immediately thereafter, is Margaret’s discovery that Henry has not only had a mistress, but that she is Leonard’s cheap and tawdry fiancée (216). But Margaret does not get “stuck” in the kind of absolutist reaction to either of these new developments that Leonard expresses when he discounts the Schlegel sisters’ values. Rather, she continues in her mandate to foster “connection” between the Wilcoxian and the Schlegelian. And, at least implicitly, it is the material basis, as a degree of excess that she can reliably draw upon, which allows this. Leonard, situated at the margin from the beginning of the novel, cannot follow her in reconciling the dichotomy that he has mapped from one extreme to the other.

I think that gift theory is a valuable lens for reading these aspects of *Howards End*, and it can be used in conjunction with Jameson’s analytical framework. The “gift economy” itself is a generatively “fuzzy” model for which, as Glenn Willmott, drawing upon recent anthropological theory, has summarized, “current economic concepts of the gift and social concepts of the House may be put together to suggest a powerful field of institutions that are irreducible to market forms” (199). Hildegard Hoeller has recently observed that “on the one hand, gifts are the very vehicles that allow writers to tell stories about capitalism while, on the other, they also bring those narratives to the brink of reason and reveal their aporias” (132).⁹ Moreover, Hoeller notes Bourdieu’s and Derrida’s emphasis on the temporal

⁹ *PMLA*’s January 2012 issue devotes a special section on Theories and Methodologies to “Economics, Finance, Capital, and Literature.” Hoeller recaps the essential theoretical background: “Marcel Mauss’s seminal *Essai sur le don* (1924)...insists that gifts -- far from being pure -- are part of an economy that depends on the obligations to give, receive, and repay (37-41). In Mary Douglas’s words, Mauss insists that ‘there should not be any free gifts....A free gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction’ (vii).” (Hoeller 133). Here,

uncertainty surrounding gifting and gift reciprocation: “This uncertainty, the very moment of giving...cannot be explained through the ‘mechanical laws’ of the ‘cycle of reciprocity’ that Mauss posits, and therefore, Bourdieu argues, the uncertainty is ‘sufficient to change the whole experience of practice, and, by the same token, its logic’ (191)” (Hoeller 133). For both Lewis Hyde and Jacques Derrida, the gift is a “transhistorical concept” (135). Hoeller suggests that this “is perhaps why Marxist literary critics have shied away from it” (135); she argues for its restoration to academic discourse “so that we can face the other outside the logos of capitalism” (135).

Moreover, Bloomsbury’s thinkers and writers would likely have been aware of contemporaneous intellectual currents in the nascent discipline of economic anthropology. Hann and Hart note, for example, Keynes’s editorial role in publishing foundational work by Bronislaw Malinowski, whose ethnography of the Trobriand Islanders was the first significant effort by an anthropologist to engage with economics: “Malinowski laid down the gauntlet to the economists by insisting, in an article published by Keynes in the *Economic Journal*, that the Trobrianders’ propensity to transfer goods as gifts refuted the idea of ‘economic man’ as a human universal (Malinowski 1921)” (43). As they summarize: “*Argonauts* was intended to demonstrate that a complex system of inter-island trade could be organized without money, markets or states and on the basis of generosity rather than greed” (43).

I think the “contradiction” between Mauss’s and Douglas’s characterizations of the redundant-yet-oxymoronic “free gift” and Virginia Woolf’s efforts to rehabilitate the potential of that concept in *Three Guineas* is, on the one hand, literally explicit, but insofar as the project of *Three Guineas* is to enhance non-hierarchical “solidarity” it may be no contradiction at all.

In two relatively early instances, Margaret talks about money with some understanding of what Schlegelian excess¹⁰ can accomplish, as well as some – perhaps less – understanding of its potential drawbacks. Complicating this portrayal, in both cases, her characterizations of unearned income and gifting are a bit too fanciful and diversionary. They are at least implicitly dismissive of the seriousness of the circumstances that confront either a Leonard Bast or Forster’s unthought-of “very poor.” First, Margaret declares to her sister Helen that, thanks to their unearned income, they, like the Wilcoxes, “stand upon money as upon islands” (57). Later, *chez* Schlegel, the sisters and their “discussion club” (117) entertain themselves by casually spinning and discarding narratives of what a Leonard Bast with not only sufficiency but excess, given to him by a hypothetical dying millionaire, might accomplish (117-19). These scenes, taken together, serve as a kind of thought experiment about the material basis for culture and perhaps the possibility of a Mooreist “good life” that the Schlegels claim to enjoy and that they also believe that Leonard might enjoy, if his economic circumstances were different. For Margaret, it is not Leonard’s character traits, education or past experience, but his socioeconomic constraints, that are dispositive – and that are, crucially, *not* fixed. She insists, of Leonard and all Leonards collectively, that money itself is what ought to be given to open doors to the liberal “good life” under England’s current capitalist economic and political structure:

‘Give them a chance. Give them money. Don’t dole them out poetry-books and railway-tickets like babies. Give them the

¹⁰ In Chapter Four of *Howards End*, Forster’s narrator characterizes the Schlegels and how they use their excess in mixed terms, even as he implies that their role is essential to the world as it “is”: “Temperance, tolerance, and sexual equality were intelligible cries to them; whereas they did not follow our Forward Policy in Thibet with the keen attention that it merits, and would at times dismiss the whole British Empire with a puzzled, if reverent, sigh. Not out of them are the shows of history erected: the world would be a grey, bloodless place were it entirely composed of Miss Schlegels. But the world being what it is, perhaps they shine out in it like stars” (26).

wherewithal to buy these things. When your Socialism comes, it may be different, and we may think in terms of commodities instead of cash. Till it comes, give people cash, for it is the warp of civilization, whatever the woof may be. The imagination ought to play upon money and realize it vividly, for it's the – second most important thing in the world. It is so slurred over and hushed up, there is so little clear thinking – oh, political economy, of course, but so few of us think clearly about our own private incomes, and admit that independent thoughts are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means. Money: give Mr. Bast money, and don't bother about his ideals. He'll pick up those for himself.' (118-19)

Margaret's implicit assumption is that socialists and liberals might wish for the same "improvements" to be conferred on Leonard, but the means that is chosen ought to be what will work in a given political and economic framework. Moreover, although Margaret's thesis is not feminist (Jacky Bast's prospects for "independent thoughts" and "ideals" are not even to be considered by the Chelsea club), it foreshadows Woolf's decades-later argument in *A Room of One's Own* about the necessity of "five hundred pounds a year" for an aspiring writer, and the potential for independence and change that such earnings, or such a bequest, might foster.

Margaret continues to question her own views and positioning as her character arc develops. She admits more than once that not only money in the abstract, but Wilcoxian-derived money, money from deplorably gritty and grim, if not worse, endeavors, is an essential basis for her comfortably Mooreist "good life." Foreshadowing the novel's conclusion, Margaret insists to Helen before her wedding ceremony and just before the narrator's poetic speculations about to whom England shall belong (163): "If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in..." (162). A bit later, she criticizes Helen for favoring *only* the vague and un-detailed:

“She dislikes all organization, and probably confuses wealth with the technique of wealth” (168). Here, contra Jameson, perhaps narrative vagueness begins to become self-reflexive.

Ironically, it conflates Helen’s and Henry’s weaknesses, Schlegelian and Wilcoxian flaws alike, when each character’s preferred mode is taken to its respective extreme: “Helen is too relentless. One can’t deal in her high-handed manner with the world” (168). Later, Margaret expands on these insights, in her dialogue with Henry and her decision to marry him. On the one hand, this brings the strengths of the two respective families, and their ways of acting in the world, into alliance. This marriage of differences is new, potentially modern, and an exemplar of the Bloomsbury “model,” an experiment toward creating something more workable than what either a Schlegel or a Wilcox could accomplish alone. But, importantly, David Bradshaw calls into question the ultimate scope of Margaret’s perspective: “in making the siblings and their aunt dependent on unearned income from railway stock and other shares (beneficiaries, in other words, of successful entrepreneurs like Henry Wilcox), Forster appears to underline the Schlegels’ *kinship* with the Wilcoxes” (157).

Even as the narrator’s speculations about whether Schlegel-like or Wilcox-like will inherit England are cast in binary terms (*Howards End* 162-63), Margaret is gesturing toward a recognition that the metaphorical answer requires a literal meeting of strengths and weaknesses, a synthesis rather than an opposition of values, one that can create something new. The exact nature of the future synthesis is necessarily inchoate; consistent with Jameson’s analysis of this novel, the present details are much too comfortably blurred. Jameson notes that Charles Wilcox “works in Uganda for his father’s Imperial and West African Rubber Company” (65 n.11). Bradshaw too observes: “one of the ‘Foreign Things’ (p. 28) in which Margaret so successfully invests may well be Henry’s highly profitable Imperial and West African Rubber Company” (157). The Wilcox house, as Outka observes,

makes “[t]he signs of empire...overt” (75), with its tropical-scene wallpaper and a “Bible from the Boer War...an ahistorical marker of British imperialism” (75). Vagueness is useful here; vagueness is also self-deceptive. To invoke Jameson, here the literal “map” is not invisible; but it is ignored. Not quite universally: Forster’s fallible-but-omniscient narrator takes pains to tell us that it is on Henry’s wall, even as Forster’s characters take no notice of it. Six hundred a year do not come only from brusque Wilcoxes with loud and polluting motorcars, wreaking their environmental externalities and exacting their capitalist inequities on the less privileged inhabitants of England itself, but also perhaps from the colonized lands depicted on this map outside Henry’s office.¹¹ Here, at least to a particularly careful reader, who by this juncture in the novel may be rather exasperated (or perhaps charmed) by Forster’s narrative persona, vagueness may seem something to be increasingly suspicious of, and maps of distant places may become something to puzzle over even as Margaret distinctly fails to do so. If so, vagueness will tend to undo itself under critical scrutiny and morph into something more legible.

By the 1930s, an epistemological reliance upon “vagueness” becomes crucial in Keynes’s development of the *General Theory*, as he moves from courting a kind of “grey” and “fuzzy” indeterminacy (*Keynes’s Lectures* 100-101), deliberately welcoming open dialogue and debate from others in his field, to crafting a mature and more concretely realized – but never fully fixed – empirical and theoretical model of the modern macroeconomy. Like Forster’s Margaret as early as 1910, Bloomsbury’s thinkers value and cultivate the capacity to shift modes, from something akin to Keynes’s “grey, fuzzy” initial phase of modeling to a more

¹¹ Setting these markers in historical context, Bradshaw observes that Henry’s Imperial and West African Rubber Company traded in “a deeply tainted commodity by the time Forster began writing *Howards End*” (164). Contemporaneous readers would have been aware of Roger Casement’s 1904 exposé of brutal conditions in the Belgian Congo, and “may have eyed Henry Wilcox in the same kind of way (if not quite with the same level of disapproval) that we now view the ivory-grabbing Kurtz and his colleagues in *Heart of Darkness*” (164).

precise and formalized kind of calculation or accounting, from Schlegel values to Wilcox ones, to generate something that supersedes and has the potential to mitigate the blind spots and errors implicit in each approach taken by itself. But the process is necessarily contingent and partial, and not simplistically teleological; Margaret's vision in *Howards End* is perhaps more complete and better-informed than either Henry's or Helen's, but it is still imperfect, a work in progress, that will in turn inform the next generation's in the context of their experiences yet to come at Howards End. Forster's reader, in turn, may use those imperfections to critique Margaret's vision, extrapolating to a broader context.

But Forster, finalizing his draft of *A Passage to India* in the 1920s, will foreground a critique of the cultural and economic consequences of imperialism. What is only hinted at in Henry's furnishings, and, for all of Margaret's insistence upon drawing "connections" and seeing the sources of her income clearly, largely elided in her bold speeches, is featured front and center in both *Passage* and *Village*, as each author draws upon direct experience to underscore that in the context of colonial exploitation this binary model cannot hold for either the British Raj or those whom it exploits.

In the meantime, Margaret can attempt to "connect" Schlegel and Wilcox values on a private, domestic level, and that is a genuinely useful experiment that, to some degree, demonstrates the potential of the Bloomsbury model. But it has at least two limitations: Schlegels and Basts cannot similarly connect, because the "gift economy" does not translate equally in their interchanges; and Margaret's attempt to bring together Schlegel and Wilcox values cannot bear too close a scrutiny of where the necessary Wilcox "dividends" come from. As in Virginia Woolf's *Room* and *Night and Day*, the focus in *Howards End* is much more on the private than the public sphere. And, as with any novel, the experiments that Forster depicts in *Howards End*, including the union of Margaret and Henry, are individual

model runs, not a general illustration of what can be done by those who decidedly will *not* inherit England – the lower class and the colonized.¹²

This shrinking back from the implications of “connecting” the details into coherent acknowledgment of the socioeconomic problems and effects of Edwardian-era liberal capitalism is, moreover, a persistent literary problem by the conclusion of the novel. As readers, we may tend to become increasingly skeptical of not only Forster’s characters in *Howards End* but his seemingly omniscient but none-too-reliable narrator. Outka observes: “Critics have, in fact, long savaged the ending as nostalgic capitulation” (91). Here, sources and uses of funds become important, as Mr. Wilcox decides that “Howards End will pass to Margaret and her nephew; the Wilcox money will be carefully channeled away from Howards End, going directly to his children. It is Margaret’s inheritance that will presumably maintain the house, though much of this (which itself comes from investments in trade) is also being given away” (91). This cannot whitewash the consequences of England’s, and the Wilcoxes’, industrialized capitalism, however, for Leonard and Jacky “have been ruthlessly and effectively purged” (92). Helen’s child may be a Bast as well as a Schlegel, to be raised among Schlegels and Wilcoxes, but, as Outka notes, “Leonard is dead (Margaret instructs Helen to forget him), and Jacky is never mentioned, seemingly so far beneath notice (or so

¹² Forster himself, like the Schlegel sisters, relied on inherited family money to support his early literary experimentation. This inheritance, from his deceased father’s side of the family, came with some Schlegel-like philosophical paradoxes, since Forster was a descendant of the founders of the Christian evangelical Clapham Sect, which viewed moneymaking not as an end in itself but as a basis for religiously-motivated philanthropy. Forster’s ancestor, Henry Thornton, the founder of the Clapham Sect, had proven himself in a financial crisis by claiming (falsely) in 1825 that the Bank of England was solvent and forestalling a run. See Forster, *Marianne Thornton, A Domestic Biography* (1956). Kermode notes of the sect’s influence upon the later generations: “It was that noble and philanthropic group, founded in the early nineteenth century by William Wilberforce, Forster’s great-grandfather the banker Henry Thornton, and others of like mind, that had established the ethics, the interests and the incomes of such minor descendants as E. M. Forster” (85). As Forster’s biographer Wendy Moffat phrases it: “Henry Thornton’s money came from banking. First he did well and then he did good” (27). Part of Thornton’s fortune, passed down through a great aunt, Marianne Thornton, thus helped to fund Forster’s literary experiments. What Margaret admits of her dividends, her literary creator perhaps also acknowledges implicitly through the ventriloquism of Margaret’s dialogue, yet simultaneously shrinks back from examining too closely, in this 1910 novel.

potentially threatening) as to be written out of the text” (92).¹³ Outka notes in the context of these depictions that “Critics often cast this tension as a crisis in liberalism” (186 n. 17).¹⁴

Does Margaret “give” to Leonard’s son and “take” from Henry to do it, or is the household arrangement at novel’s end simply another way that Schlegels self-absorbedly manage to enjoy their own version of the good life at everyone else’s expense? When Leonard ceases to take poetry and philanthropy seriously, perhaps he must be gotten rid of for the Schlegels’ deceptively vague self-narrative to cohere. Instead of a metaphorical thesis and antithesis leading to a possible synthesis, the real antithesis to Schlegelian assumptions -- not Henry Wilcox, but Leonard Bast -- is dropped from the metaphorical argument. That reading, however, is only one of many that is potentially open, given the indeterminacy of the conclusion.¹⁵ That very indeterminacy invites the reader’s active and critical participation with the text -- an unstable narrative that metaphorically seeks its own undoing.

Outka does observe in passing that it is important not to read Forster and Virginia Woolf largely in opposition, as is usually the case, since both Bloomsbury authors explore questions of the commodified authentic (194 n. 3). I would argue the same (as the pairing of Margaret Schlegel’s speech to her Chelsea club with Woolf’s later polemic in *Room* might

¹³ Although it is somewhat beyond the scope of this chapter, Outka’s reading of the conclusion of *Howards End* in terms of the “commodified authentic” is persuasive. She notes: “While the final nostalgic tableau is, to borrow a commercial term, a sellout, this vision must be read as part of a larger meditation on the perils and appeals of the commodified authentic” (92). Moreover, Forster “explores the financial and human costs of producing this country vision, its careful construction, its illusion of purification, and finally the overwhelming desire to purchase this illusion, a desire Forster undeniably shares” (92). Thus, argues Outka: “A single-minded critical focus on condemning the blindness of Forster’s nostalgia not only misses the contradictory treatment of nostalgic space in *Howards End* but in fact partakes of the very blindness such a focus seeks to correct” (92).

¹⁴ Thus, as Outka recapitulates: “Trilling observes the discomfort of the liberal intellectual who is ‘obscurely aware how dependent is his existence upon the business civilization he is likely to fear and despise (*E. M. Forster* 125). [...] Born notes a similar tension between culture and capital, but he finds that the final failure to reconcile or even acknowledge these connections does not reflect a failure of liberalism but instead serves as a warning to liberalism itself, ‘that it cannot relax if it is to remain functional’ (“Private Gardens, Public Swamps” 159).

¹⁵ See also, for example, Robert K. Martin’s “‘It Must Have Been the Umbrella’: Forster’s Queer Begetting” (266-72).

begin to suggest) with respect to Forster's and Woolf's literary treatments of Bloomsbury's binary economic model. This model, addressing the utility of a material basis for art and the "good life," and employing both precision and vagueness in an experimental, iterative process of exploration, is only at a beginning point as Forster writes *Howards End*. The novel's limitations as an early "experiment" are revisited in Forster's later work. If one major problem that is insufficiently examined in *Howards End*, although hinted at by the narrator's descriptions of Wilcox furnishings, is the role of Empire and imperial exploitation and its socioeconomic and cultural consequences, *A Passage to India* will acknowledge, indeed, it will insist upon, the impossibility of connecting across barriers imposed by the mis-valuations of culture and the political economies of imperialism.

II. "[T]he coin that buys the exact truth has not yet been minted":¹⁶ *A Passage to India* and the Cultural Economics of Imperialism

A Passage to India and *The Village in the Jungle* are "test cases," in which the experimental Bloomsbury economic model does not and cannot work under conditions of colonial exploitation. In both *Passage* and *Village*, Forster and Leonard Woolf demonstrate that we cannot apply the Bloomsbury model on either a public or private scale at the intersection of Edwardian-era British imperialism and future postcolonial cultures-to-be, since the fundamental assumptions of the imperialist governing paradigm are antithetical to the model. Following their travels and professional experiences in India and Ceylon respectively, and by the end of their work on these two novels, neither Forster nor Leonard Woolf can any longer "stand roughly" at peace with colonialism. There is a larger yes/no binary at play here, and absolute one, in the category of Wittgenstein's relatively few things

¹⁶ *Passage* 15.

of which one can be “certain”: the imperialist economic, political and sociocultural paradigm must end before the Bloomsbury model can be brought into play in any genuine sense. The question is left open, but implicit, in *Passage*, that perhaps a socioeconomic and political model derived from each culture’s own values may prevail, to be brought into dialogue between the generations that will succeed Aziz and Fielding. The possibility of such a future dialogue is even more remote in *Village*. Leonard Woolf’s socioeconomic case study in literary form is an analysis of what is literally unsustainable and therefore simply must end. Colonialist “taking” must stop for “giving” to be possible between either culture.

These postcolonial analyses of course throw into question the potential scope of the Bloomsbury model’s applicability in the *sensus communis* of Bloomsbury itself and the “shrinking” island of England. Is it enough, like Margaret Schlegel does in *Howards End*, to acknowledge the necessity of one’s dividends, if one does not pay attention to where they come from and work to bring to an end a political and economic structure that runs contrary to the “good life”? Fuzziness and indeterminacy become not potentially generative but ethically problematic when a Schlegel neglects to give a hard look at the tokens of imperialist plunder on the walls of a Wilcox room. Facts and vagueness are not completely brought together in this respect in *Howards End*, foreshadowing both the conclusion of that novel, with Leonard Bast’s demise and its (at least) double causation, and Forster’s repetition and elaboration of this failure in *Passage* on the part of most of the British Raj, with concludes with the futility of Aziz’s and Fielding’s efforts to “connect” against a backdrop of colonialist exploitation.

In *Passage*, the exploitative parameters imposed on the model by British rule do not allow for genuine, sustained friendship between Dr. Aziz and Fielding. Nor do they allow for an economic version of the “good life” or, for Dr. Aziz, who is both a professional physician

and a would-be poet – unlike solicitor and aspiring writer Ralph Denham in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* – the ability to use his profession as a material basis for later work as a writer. Early in *Passage*, in a voluntary private moment between the two men as they prepare for the mandatory public performance of an English tea, Dr. Aziz's loan of a collar stud to Fielding is, in the terms that Virginia Woolf would use a decade later in *Three Guineas*, a "free gift freely given." The Hindu physician, of his own initiative, willingly offers the "gold" (68) accessory, a gift that his brother-in-law "had brought back from Europe" (68), to the British teacher: "Take mine, take mine" (67). Although Fielding demurs at first, he perceives correctly that this is not a mere show of politeness: "'Many thanks'. They shook hands smiling. [Fielding] began to look round, as he would have with any old friend" (68). This initial exchange happens on a private level and it fosters a potential bond between the two men (one that is rather clearly open to a psychological reading suggesting sexual flirtation as well as friendship).¹⁷

Their initial meeting of the minds is quickly complicated by misunderstanding. They sort out this much of the confusion intuitively, however, assuming the best rather than the worst of each other (70). But the confusion worsens as Forster's characters stumblingly but inevitably chart a course toward their expedition to the Marabar caves. The disastrous expedition is the accidental consequence of a series of misread gifts: unfreely offered, substituted, taken. This sequence begins with Aziz's offer of hospitality to his own home, an offer that is prompted by Mrs. Moore's question about Indian etiquette and his impulse to prove that India is not a "muddle" (73), following her "disappointment" (72) about an earlier, unfulfilled invitation from a Hindu couple (72). Reacting "rather out of his depth"

¹⁷ Peter Childs, for example, notes: "To many critics, the book's (absent) centre is therefore the homosexual relationship between Fielding and Aziz – whose name means 'beloved' in Arabic and Urdu – which is an image of the friendship between Forster and the book's dedicatee, Syed Ross Masood" (196).

(73) rather than from an impulse of private generosity, as with the loan of the collar stud to Fielding, Aziz's formalistic offer is fumbled by their quick acceptance. His embarrassment about the condition of his home is excoriating: "Aziz thought of his bungalow with horror. It was a detestable shanty near a low bazaar" (73).

Forster lays out the socioeconomic and cultural complexities in this scene. Dr. Aziz, a Muslim, has just described Hindu homes and ways to the Englishwomen in similar terms, trying to account for Mrs. Moore's bollixed invitation on those grounds: "Slack Hindus [...] It is as well you did not go to their house, for it would give you a wrong idea of India. Nothing sanitary. I think for my own part they grew ashamed of their house and that is why they did not send" (72).) But what unites Aziz's quick derogation of the houses of his Hindu countrymen, whom Forster makes clear would return the jibe, and his own reaction of colonially-inflected embarrassment at the poverty of his own home, is the assumption that "guests" from Britain, who are politically and economically no guests at all, are in a rightful position to judge those from whom they have taken, for what the latter consequently do not have.

Aziz tries to change the subject: "Oh, but we will talk of something else now" (73). Mrs. Moore and Adela do not pick up the cue. Newly arrived in India, they apparently cannot understand the implications of their own privilege and complicity in colonialist exploitation, and so they continue to misread Aziz's discomfort and to construe his invitation as genuine: "He thought again of his bungalow with horror. Good heavens, the stupid girl had taken him at his word! What was he to do?" (79) The invitation shifts into plans for a trip to the Marabar caves (79-80). This too Aziz, who has never visited the caves

himself, of course does not really mean. But “[t]he dialogue remained light and friendly, and Adela had no conception of its underdrift” (80).¹⁸

The first kind of gift, the collar stud exchanged between Aziz and Fielding, from Claude Levi-Strauss’s perspective could initiate the kind of exchange, characterized by mutuality, that might potentially create and sustain lasting communal bonds. But gift theory, as summarized in Section I (10-11), acknowledges the Derridean problem of temporal gaps that may render a reciprocal gift impossible. Moreover, the British mode of “taking” in the context of colonialist exploitation forecloses the possibility of such mutuality, and the public and private cultural intersections that might be fostered by it. Instead, the two men are confronted with a binary model of irreconcilable values, in which one culture systematically exploits the other.

Arriving late, and reflexively disapproving of the tea (81), British colonial magistrate Ronnie Heaslop, Mrs. Moore’s son and Adela Quested’s potential intended, maps a further misreading onto Aziz’s initial private gift. The possibility of any generous intention between Indian and English eludes Ronnie entirely. Especially given his reaction to their socializing, does Aziz’s later “gift” of hospitality, first to his home but then rapidly substituting the cave, perhaps also try to assert the values of the subaltern over those of the imperialists, who take and exploit? That is the public context, while the private is an attempt at genuine friendship with, at least, Aziz and Mrs. Moore. Moreover, the sexual subtext between Fielding and Aziz further complicates this private context, given its potential for, on the one hand, norm-breaking and valorized Forsterian connection, and on the other, an inevitable element of

¹⁸ David Medalie finds Forster’s characterization of Adela to be “satirical” (38): “She is clearly identified as a product of a Bloomsbury-type world – as a Bloomsbury ideologue, in fact – and seeks, in an environment which is conspicuously resistant to her designs, to implement her Bloomsbury values. The rebuff that she receives is a dramatisation of the perception that it is profoundly dangerous to attempt to transpose values without a careful consideration of the contexts in which they are to be applied” (38).

exploitation, even if neither intends it, given the sociopolitical context and its mapping upon the racial and class differences between the two men. Adela's sexual repression, too, precipitates the foreseeable disaster of the Marabar caves. All of this leads to indeterminacy and confusion, which is not generative: two conflicting models of valuation,¹⁹ English and Indian, cannot work toward a synthesis but instead add misunderstanding upon misunderstanding to chart an inevitable course toward harm and the destruction of value.

The unraveling of "connection" that might have been hoped for with the first of Aziz's gifts seems to confirm Mahmoud Ali's early assertion that friendship between Indians and English "is impossible" in India (7). Prospects of individual, cross-cultural friendship are perhaps possible in England, if one is a guest, but not possible in India where one is an unwilling host. The overarching influence of the British Raj, whose culture stymies this, money – which is the *raison d'être* for Anglo-Indian oppression – and, entwined with it, a British legal system whose rules provide a structure for colonialist "taking," renders individual reciprocity and hospitality impossible in the absence of economic and social justice.

Frank Kermode notes that the trial scene in *Passage* was criticized, especially by contemporaneous Indian reviewers, as "full of technical error," which made them wonder why Forster had not "taken the trouble to find out how, and by whom, such trials were conducted" (Kermode 82). Such reviewers were presumably unaware that Forster had consulted with Leonard Woolf, who had both acted in Ceylon as, and fictionalized in *Village* the role of, a colonial magistrate – two different tasks with considerably different aims, only

¹⁹ Lewis Hyde notes (21-22) that, when Fielding and Aziz engage in a debate about gift and commodity, they cite competing Urdu and English proverbs. Aziz's rather vague "scarcity appears when wealth does not flow," and even vaguer "If money goes, money comes. If money stays, death comes" are strangely Keynesian -- a decade before the *General Theory* would emphasize that money must circulate in order to ameliorate economic crisis. By contrast, Fielding's "A penny saved is a penny earned" invokes stasis and exact enumeration, upon which a waning Empire rests.

one allowing for much creative license. Forster foregrounds indeterminacy in the trial scenes, seeking to expand metaphorical if not literal culpability in terms that show a cross-cultural meeting of the minds – Ronnie Heaslop’s and Professor Godbole’s, for instance – is simply impossible. Kermode also quotes Forster on the indeterminacy of the Marabar Caves: “I tried to show that India is an unexplainable muddle by introducing an unexplained muddle – Miss Quested’s experience in the cave. When asked what happened there *I don’t know*” (Kermode 82).

The men’s cynicism in the early scene is warranted – even in the rare instance, as with Aziz and Fielding, where it is literally mistaken. Adela and Fielding, in the aftermath of the Marabar expedition, ultimately make choices that enable Aziz’s acquittal from a charge of rape. Based on Fielding’s urging, Aziz refuses the damages that would otherwise be due him under British law, and which would ruin Adela. However, not only friendship but trust prove impossible, when Aziz assumes the worst of Fielding’s motives in persuading him to refuse those “damages.” At first unwilling to refuse them, Aziz acknowledges that the damages are intended “on account of the injury sustained by my character” (278-79) as a result of the criminal proceedings, and he also knows that the British will assume his refusal is intended to gain their “approval” for his “behav[ing] like a gentleman” (279); but this “no longer interests” (279) Aziz, for he has become “anti-British, and ought to have done so sooner” (279). Continuing the quarrel, on the question of what Fielding asserts are his not “in proportion” emotions, Aziz contends: “If you are right, there is no point in any friendship; it all comes down to give and take, or give and return, which is disgusting” (282-83). But he does finally renounce the compensation, albeit as a gesture of respect for what he assumes to be Mrs. Moore’s wish (290), only to suspect Fielding “of intending to marry Miss Quested

for the sake of her money, and of going to England for that purpose” (310) – a suspicion that is wrong, and that he simultaneously disbelieves (311).

Ultimately, it does not matter and cannot save their friendship for Aziz to learn, two years later, that he has been mistaken about this. He is “haunted” by the suspicion in terms that invoke the costs of imperialist exploitation:

‘Where are my twenty thousand rupees?’ he thought. He was absolutely indifferent to money – not merely generous with it, but promptly paying his debts when he could remember to do so – yet these rupees haunted his mind, because he had been tricked about them, and allowed them to escape overseas, like so much of the wealth of India. (313)

And, when they meet, he tells Fielding: “I thought you’d stolen my money, but’ – he clapped his hands together, and his children gathered round him – ‘it’s as if you stole it: (339). He is now certain: “My heart is for my own people henceforward” (339).

In Claude Levi-Strauss’s anthropological model, a gift imposes an obligation in return, and builds an economy of valued connection between giver and recipient. Mauss holds that the obligation of reciprocity is a precursor of contract law. But the British Raj does not give; it “takes,” and this clashes with the fundamental assumptions of the socioeconomic model of the gift economy. The modern capitalist economy of Adam Smith’s free market is of course not applicable, either, for the colonized cannot bargain on equal terms with their colonizers. The British do not acknowledge the humanity of the Indians; this fundamental refusal throws all other attempts at cross-cultural valuation into a “muddle.” It is not that Forster’s India itself is a “muddle” (73), but that the British Raj’s attempts to map distorted valuations onto India create chaos. As in *Howards End*, but now emphasizing a public as well as a private context, questions of value depend upon where one stands.

But where Aziz stands is clear, not vague, by the close of the novel. Forgiving one Englishwoman's legal debt, he paradoxically recognizes and asserts a greater claim on behalf of his countrymen against the British Raj. Metonymically, he conflates Adela Quested's 20,000 rupees, owing as "compensation" upon his acquittal for a charge of rape, with India's wealth "allowed...to escape overseas" (313). This metaphorical map, situating colony, metropole and the unequal flow of funds between them, is in much sharper focus than the one on Henry Wilcox's wall. Esty notes that Forster's "prototypically metropolitan aesthetic culminates in *A Passage to India*, with its failed colonial romance" (28). But this "failure" is also a political act on Aziz's part. In contrast to *Howards End*, here the political is made explicit. Because the costs and realities of colonialism can no longer be obscured, vagueness at Marabar²⁰ gives way to an exact accounting of colonial damages.

Aziz chooses medicine as a profession for pragmatic reasons. But, especially after the trial, he makes clear to Fielding and others that he has a calling as a poet. He attempts to write a poem at the Hindu magistrate's request, but he cannot; his questions suggest the difficulty of doing so at the very beginning of his revolutionary awareness: "In what language shall it be written? And what shall it announce?" (298). The narrator observes: "The poem for Mr. Bhattacharya never got written, but it had an effect. It led him towards the vague and bulky figure of a mother-land" (298). Aziz resolves to "get away from British India, even to a poor job. I think I could write poetry there" (299). Aziz does at least change his job, and his children thrive with him as a provider. Two years later, he tells Fielding: "My mother's father

²⁰ Esty, extending Jameson's thesis, argues: "In *Passage*...Forster records the epistemological obstacles of imperialism that lead to muffled fantasies and thwarted romance. Here spatial infinity does not operate as a crypto-imperialist figure (Jameson's 'leak to infinity' that destabilizes the English setting of *Howards End*), but instead breaks the surface of the novel's political unconsciousness at Marabar, becoming an unignorable thematic element that exposes metropolitan perception as an imperial problem" (78). In Esty's view, which I think is an important partial explanation that does not take sufficient account of Forster's *non-Anglocentric* late modernist writings, consequently "he turned to the green insular core of Anglocentric fantasy in the 1930s, no longer framing England as one part of a charged domestic/alien dyad but rather as the self-sufficient object of pastoral romance" (79). Charu Malik also finds Jameson's framework useful for reading *Passage* (234 n.1).

was also a poet, and fought against you in the Mutiny. I might equal him if there was another mutiny. As it is, I am a doctor, who has won a case and has three children to support, and whose chief subject of conversation is official plans” (308).

The possibility of Fielding and Aziz participating in something like Froula’s *sensus communis* is similarly foreclosed by the framework of colonialist exploitation. A *sensus communis* needs a relative degree of equality to function, on a public level, as does Moore’s ideal of mutually enjoyed friendship and aesthetic contemplation on a private level. British imperialism destroys the prospect of a “free gift freely given,” or even trust in this possibility, of true generosity and equal exchange. Nothing can compensate for these “damages.” The valuations in *Passage* do not add up, except insofar as, on a private level, Aziz and Fielding both value Forsterian friendship. They struggle to express this commonality although circumstances are against it, and by the close of the novel, there is both certainty that their friendship is not possible in a colonial context, and the vague and utopian possibility of change in the longer view.

Forster narrates significant sections of *Passage* from Aziz’s point of view; this results in some awkwardnesses, if not worse. *Passage*, although universally recognized as Forster’s most modern and least optimistic novel, does conclude with something of a utopian call toward the hope for historical change and cross-cultural connection after the system of British imperialism is overthrown. Leonard Woolf’s *The Village in the Jungle*, bleaker still, does not even hold out this prospect. And, for both authors, these novels of destructive imperialism mark an endpoint of another kind: an end to novel-making and a turn to more overt forms of the Bloomsbury polemic.

Forster, returning from his second visit to India, recognized that the pace of change and growing anti-British sentiment rendered his earlier work on *Passage* obsolete. Victoria

Glendinning, notes that Forster “spent several nights of discussion at Hogarth House in the first half of 1922” (220). Forster acknowledged that he “probably should not have completed [*Passage*] without the encouragement of Leonard Woolf” (*The Hill of Devi* 238). Less known, and less modernist in style, Leonard Woolf’s earlier novel also takes the socioeconomic values and costs of colonialism as its central theme and suggests a similar conclusion: we can be “certain,” in Wittgensteinian terms, that the framework must change before a viable Bloomsbury economic model, whether liberal or socialist, can be realized. Moreover, in each of these novels, Forster and Leonard Woolf grapple with the cultural economics of imperialism in a way that Keynes never does, despite their common rhetorical and philosophical approaches to economic valuation and empirical modeling.²¹

As with *Passage*, the narrator’s certainty in *Village* that colonialist exploitation is not sustainable suggests that both Forster and Leonard Woolf are at least reaching toward an ethical recognition that social injustice must be rectified with the end of Britain’s imperialist presence in the East. And the degree of harm is extreme: in *Passage*, Aziz cannot be a poet if he is to feed his children; but by the crisis point that leads to his arrest in *Village*, Silindu simply cannot feed his children by any available means, and his conviction vitiates this possibility entirely. Both sets of consequences, the absence of a material basis for art and the absence of one for barest survival, are traceable to the economics of British colonialism; what might have funded either instead decorates the Chelsea homes of Wilcoxes and Schlegels and refurbishes Howards End. The problem is, of course, that if a well-meaning and incipiently-socialist colonial administrator leaves his post to live like a Schlegel, he still cannot undo his knowledge of how Margaret’s, and his own and his wife’s, necessary dividends are gotten. The same holds true for Margaret’s literary creator, after years of travel

²¹ Keynes’s biographer Robert Skidelsky has noted: “Maynard always saw the Raj from Whitehall: he never considered the human and moral implications of imperial rule” (Skidelsky, Vol. I, 176).

and work in Alexandria and India. Something more than a separate peace, as with £500 a year and a room with a lock on the door, thus becomes essential for Leonard Woolf and for Forster, and in their case it requires a particular critique of Britain's economic and political involvements with imperialism. Both, after these novels about the economic consequences of colonialism, turn to nonfictional forms of the Bloomsbury polemic to continue to explore these questions.

III. "[W]ords have two functions": Rhetoric and Economics in Forster's Nonfiction

Forster abandoned writing novels after *A Passage to India*, for reasons that his biographers and critics collectively indicate were overdetermined. One causative factor was his expressed boredom with the conventional marriage plot, while novels such as *Maurice* could not be published given the realities of British censorship law. But also, given the rise of fascism as a foreseeable "economic consequence" of both reparations for World War One and in the aftermath of the Great Depression, civic engagement in defense of Bloomsbury's ideals of liberal democracy helps to explain Forster's turn to nonfiction writing; and, as noted in Section II, the insufficiency of the novel form (all the more so if its indeterminacies with respect to imperialism were no longer unconscious) to depict colonial problems and prompt change in favor of political and economic justice is another. Christie, critiquing Forster in 2005, as did Lionel Trilling two generations before him in 1943 (Trilling, *Forster* 7-24), finds Forster's turn to prose against a backdrop of rising totalitarianism to be effective in promoting this viewpoint: "as literary expressions of liberal democracy, Forster's pastoral novels do not sustain critical scrutiny as readily, for example, as do the essays in *Two Cheers for Democracy*" (Christie 177 n. 5).

Keynes and Forster as liberals, and Leonard Woolf as a socialist, all wrote extensively on behalf of their political commitments. Forster's essays on economics and liberalism, especially "What I Believe" and "My Wood," can be set usefully in dialogue with the economic tropes of his fiction.²² In addition, previous literary scholarship on Forster, pragmatism and liberalism is valuable in analyzing Keynes's and the Woolfs' own commitments to liberalism and pragmatism. Forster's substantive and rhetorical approach to this later nonfiction, in contrast with such absolutist polemicists as Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, exemplifies the Bloomsbury polemic. A key Forsterian rhetorical and aesthetic principle, bridging both the novels and the later prose, is set forth in "Anonymity: An Enquiry" (1925), where Forster maintains that "words have two functions to perform: they give information or they create an atmosphere" (77). This phrasing for a linguistic binary recalls the Bloomsbury model, with its dual and iterative use of the exact and the vague, the Wilcoxian and the Schlegelian, and of course Forster acknowledges that they can and should be connected: "Often they do both, for the two functions are not incompatible" (77).

In "What I Believe" (1939), Forster makes his famous, or infamous, pronouncement: "I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country" (68). But this needs interpretation based on historical and political context: elsewhere in his liberal credo, he proclaims: "Two Cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough: there is no occasion to give three.

²² Biographer Wendy Moffat has recently detailed Forster's continuing production of pornographic short stories after he abandoned the novel; however, these efforts were not intended for public circulation. After *Passage*, Forster as silent novelist enters neither "commodities" nor "gifts" of a fictional genre into the literary marketplace. Still, his non-fictional prose, like not only the Woolfs's but Keynes's, often makes use of fictional tropes to persuasive rhetorical effect.

Only Love the Beloved Republic deserves that” (70). Martin and Piggford note that, with liberalism and democracy both under siege, “the individual remains, as a possible citizen of the republic of Love” (“Introduction” 2). That conceit would, of course, have been both metaphorical and particularly utopian in 1938. Democracy, the public sphere, flourishes in an atmosphere of “variety” and “criticism”; it can be improved but it is imperfect and, in Forster’s own time, direly threatened by fascism. “Love the Beloved Republic” is the private sphere, utopian, but most likely to flourish. So, too, are Moore’s disciples most likely to flourish under such a regime: “The people I admire most are those who are sensitive and want to create something or discover something, and do not see life in terms of power, and such people get more of a chance under democracy than elsewhere” (69).

All of this, mapped onto the economic assumptions that Forster explores in *Howards End*, implies a need for a material basis, a sufficient excess to allow for creation and discovery, but also a corresponding critique of the kind of Wilcoxian acquisitiveness that conflates capital and power: “It does not divide its citizens into the bossers and the bossed – as an efficiency-regime tends to do” (69). Forster even attempts to remap class stratifications in this Mooreist vein, allowing for “recognition” even across cultures in an imperfect world, as Fielding and Aziz had at least been allowed in *Passage*, even if their attempts at genuine friendship were doomed: “I believe in aristocracy, though – if that is the right word, and if a democrat may use it. Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky” (73). Far from the limitations of *Howards End*, where Forster’s focus had been solely on the middle-class of England, here an almost postcolonial Forster declares: “Its members are to be found in all nations and classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over

cruelty and chaos” (73). This is, finally, a Forsterian rhetorical and moral absolute, and a compelling one. However, it is also a fragile claim -- such a “permanent” victory must also be one perpetually under threat, or always in need of renewal, in the context of repeated world war. Moreover, Forster’s reframing of his “aristocracy” is perhaps as open to pragmatic critique as Virginia Woolf’s attempts in the 1930s to conflate artistic integrity with aristocratic outsidership. Again, “[i]nfluence” – or the lack of it – is one potential problem. In the context of the 1930s, it cannot be other than utopian, and this has both potentials and pitfalls, as do Woolf’s and Keynes’s variations on that theme in the same decade.

Finally, in “What I Believe,” Forster allies himself with the Keynes of “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren” in a liberal atheistic invocation that shifts from economics as a “worldly philosophy” to the moral and political philosophy that it was once, in Adam Smith’s thought, conflated with. Liberalism reaches out to socialism in this utopian vision, but it is one that Forster himself acknowledges is hardly close in sight (75). Invoking three different disciplines, and implying that humanistic “good will” can implement a technocratic solution, he continues: “A similar change is needed in the sphere of morals and politics” (75).

Forster recorded many radio broadcasts against fascism, beginning in 1940. In these, his focus is generally liberal and literary, rarely addressing the subject of economics directly. But his 1944 broadcast on Keynes’s doctrinal nemesis, the Austrian School’s founder, Friedrich Hayek, stands out as an illustration of the Bloomsbury method brought to bear on matters of economics, by the non-expert, in a way that foregrounds rhetoric and method and links them, in a surprising structural turn, to the long view of history and the prospects for “civilization.” Forster presents his argument in the genre of a seemingly modest book review – the broadcast is entitled “Some Books: Hayek, Laski, Wedgwood, Smyth, ‘Q’” – setting up

Hayek's free-market polemic, *The Road to Serfdom*, against the "generally Marxist" Harold Laski's *Faith, Reason and Civilisation*. But Forster opens his talk with a more general rhetorical observation: "In times of war and unrest – like the present – we do not merely fight our enemies, we tend to scold our friends" (281). Advocates of a given solution thus "naturally pushes it for all it's worth, and shoves anything that opposes it out of the way" (282). The critique of rhetorical absolutism thus frames the piece; Forster does not here name, but the reader might call to mind a fellow literary radio broadcaster, the poet Ezra Pound, as a further example of that genre.

Forster does the opposite. Initially addressing rhetorical register and not theoretical or political substance, he pairs the works; they are "a couple of interesting books," by men whom he thinks to be of good motive: "Each of them is appalled by the state of the world, tries to explain it, and advises how it may be improved. Each of them is sincere, and hates evil. But here the concord between them ends" (282). Were the two professors to meet, thinks Forster, they would surely "scold" each other (282). As for the two books, reposing together on his table: "I can't think why they don't explode. I wish they would, and would leave me, as their residue, the truth" (282).

That, of course, is impossible, since absolute "truth" is hardly to be found in either economic treatise, and Forster emphasizes this when he advises his reader to purchase the likely counter-argument to his or her own preferred and perhaps too-comfortable economic paradigm: "So I recommend these two books, and I recommend you most the one with which you will disagree" (283). Of his own reaction to "these two violently opposed books" (283), he confesses:

To be quite frank, I dislike them both. They lead me into places which are uncongenial to me, and where I can't tread firmly, no doubt through my own incapacity. They make statements which please me, and then draw unpleasant

deductions. Incidentally I am more of a pessimist politically than either author [...] I hope you'll manage to get hold of them, and when I said just now that I disliked them, I didn't mean that I wasn't fascinated or instructed by them. I was." (283)

In a slightly startling but purposeful shift, Forster then praises a new biography, by "Miss C. V. Wedgwood," of the sixteenth-century Dutch ruler William the Silent. While the politics of the era were "very confused," Forster announces: "the main issue is clear enough. William the Silent stood for toleration" (284). Accordingly, he sought first to compromise with rival Spain, and when this failed, "because he could get in touch with people who were not of his class, but were tradesmen and manual workers – he united the Dutch and made them a nation" (284). Then comes the subtle Forsterian critique, launched by implicit juxtaposition against the two "violently" "scolding" leaders of rival economic factions: "It is not often that the civilized person comes to the top during a time of unrest. It is generally the reformer or the tough or some other variant of the strong man, and Professor Hayek has indeed a chapter about our own time [...] But civilization did triumph in the person of William the Silent" (284).

Less a rhetorical analysis, but a more direct consideration of the necessity and dangers of a material basis for art, Forster addresses the complexities of private property and their political implications in "My Wood" (1926). This essay, calling to mind Virginia Woolf's reflections in *Room, Three Guineas* and her two "novels of fact," *Night and Day* and *The Years*, on this subject, underscores and also critiques the implications of a Mooreist conception of wealth as a material basis for art. Prompted by his own first purchase of land, Forster addresses the "psychology" of owning things (21). The bird that he thinks of (necessarily briefly) as "my bird" suggests that ownership is a convention and an illusory relation. Thus, he warns against "property" as a substitute for "[c]reation and enjoyment"

(23). These two latter Mooreist values are, declares Forster, “both very very good, yet they are often unattainable without a material basis, and at such moments property pushes itself in as a substitute, saying, ‘Accept me instead – I’m good enough for all three.’ It is not enough” (23). Rather, there must be a hierarchy of value between property, on the one hand, and these elements of the good life, on the other, sufficiency but not unremitting greed. Otherwise – and here Forster’s caricature calls to mind Woolf’s bemedalled and inhuman patriarchs of *Three Guineas*, or even perhaps land-obsessed Kitty Lasswade’s impoverishment, in *The Years*, in every sense except the literal one compared with the love and work that she had hoped for in her youth: “Enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudo-creative, intensely selfish, I shall weave upon my forehead the quadruple crown of possession until those nasty Bolshies come and take it off again and thrust me aside into the outer darkness” (24). Such joking was perhaps a little too easy before 1929 and its economic and political aftermath, but Forster is also making a serious point in this passage, predicting that two extremes cannot coexist indefinitely without violent conflict that renders impossible the prospect of a creative and generative Mooreist utopia.

Forster’s acknowledgment in these essays and radio broadcasts that he is no economist, while certainly accurate, belies the attention that he pays to the theme in his novels and his persistent linkage of economics to the context of political and ethical dilemmas that he treats with increasing seriousness and directness against the rise of fascism. His frankness in acknowledging his amateur status with respect to his fellow Bloomsbury liberal Keynes’s discipline seems, in large measure, a deliberate and effective rhetorical device. It disarms his audience, as Forster the non-economist makes common cause with his readers and listeners, suggesting that they, too, should feel encouraged to think about these things, and, crucially, as in the broadcast critiquing Hayek and his adversary, to draw meta-

level and larger-scale conclusions based less on a choice to favor either free-market or socialist doctrine than on a predisposition to be skeptical about ideological absolutism on right or left compared with the liberal Bloomsbury method. Setting Hayek up against Laski frames the rhetorical argument perfectly; the contemporaneous alternative, as any of Forster's listeners who had not completely neglected the subject, or even the newspapers, would have known, was less the 16th century William the Silent, but a fellow Bloomsburyite about whom Forster is silent in the script, his fellow liberal and pragmatic non-absolutist, Keynes.

But Cuddy-Keane does offer a caution about Forster's particular rhetorical variations on the Bloomsbury polemic. For Cuddy-Keane, Virginia Woolf styles a voice that "shapes itself according to her imagined reader's response" (86) and thus "negotiates...differences separating readers" (86), a more sophisticated approach than that of Forster (85-86), which P. N. Furbank critiqued in 1978 as "simplifying issues and putting them into words of one syllable, which was often effective and charming but on occasion could sound like 'talking down'" (Furbank vol. I 147). Furbank attributes "this habit" to Forster's teaching at the Working Men's College (97, 174) – and if Virginia Woolf was apt to be critiqued as a "snob" for reasons of rhetorical style as well as Bloomsbury identification, Furbank attributes Forster's rhetorical simplicity for resistance on the opposite ground, as when F. R. Leavis impugned *Aspects of the Novel* as an "intellectual nullity" (147). Leavis, granted, tended to seize whatever critical ammunition was available when a Bloomsbury author was up for assessment; *Aspects*, as well as the Clark Lectures upon which the book was based, were widely praised by critics, too.

However, this criticism of Forster's nonfictional rhetorical technique has been more general; for example, S. P. Rosenbaum, comparing *Aspects* with Virginia Woolf's *Room*, cites

“Forster’s obliviousness...to how the conditions of life affect the novel and determine the opportunities of its authors to become novelists in the first place” (*Aspects of Bloomsbury* 108). This seems dubious given a more general consideration of Forster’s *oeuvre*, including the greater complexity that Forster suggests in his characterization of Leonard Bast’s limited options to access culture in *Howards End* and Dr. Aziz’s socioeconomic and political barriers to properly fulfilling his poetic calling in *Passage*. Ultimately, perhaps, the literary and the polemical must be read together for the full scope of Forster’s “argument” to cohere. The earlier fiction serves to gloss the later, more deliberately simplified prose, and vice versa.

One particularly illustrative pairing, bridging Forster’s biographical arc from Edwardian novelist to late modern radio broadcaster, suggests that it does. In a 1946 BBC broadcast, “The Challenge of Our Time,” Forster even-handedly assesses his own Schlegelian education, valuing it as “humane” (68) but also critiquing it as “imperfect, inasmuch as we none of us realized our economic position” (68). Finally, he states the core problem in a single sentence: “In came the nice fat dividends, up rose the lofty thoughts, and we did not realize that all the time we were exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward races abroad, and getting bigger profits from our investments than we should” (68). This is still “imperfectly” phrased, implicitly privileging the assumed “forwardness” of a liberal Bloomsbury education and problematically conflating the distinction with race. But it is much more than Margaret Schlegel, and perhaps even Cyril Fielding, could have conceptualized in such clear and direct terms. And, as it would have been heard by a popular British audience, Forster’s post-World War Two insight surely carried with it real potential for furthering sociopolitical and humanistic change.

Bloomsbury can sometimes recognize, at least to a limited extent, the structural context in which others, whether a Leonard Bast or a Dr. Aziz, under Britain’s inegalitarian

economic system and within the confines of its shrinking empire, can afford even less, and at a greater price. Here, linguistic vagueness is potentially revelatory, as in *Passage*, although, as in *Howards End*, it is sometimes also potentially a vehicle for a character's or a narrator's convenient evasion of harsh political and economic facts. Bloomsbury's, and Forster's, empirical method helps to foster the former even as, if sometimes more gradually than one might hope, it does manage to persist in reflecting upon and interrogating the latter. There is a real progression from Margaret's fictional dialogue on economics, valuation and liberal humanism in 1910 to Fielding's in the mid-1920s to Forster's own non-fictional written and spoken words in 1946, and ultimately it is a necessarily incomplete but nonetheless genuinely constructive one.

Chapter Four

Keynes, Bloomsbury's Print Culture, and the Problem of German Reparations

Literally a question, and visually a question mark, a 1928 advertisement in *The Nation and Athenaeum* (the “N&A”), while that periodical was under John Maynard Keynes’s control, invites readers to order a free sample copy of the German economic journal, *Wirtschaftsdienst* (**Exhibit 1**). Readers of the N&A could thus obtain, the advertisement promised, “Unbiased Information About GERMANY.” *Wirtschaftsdienst*, founded in 1916 by Dr. Kurt Singer of the University of Hamburg, encompassed writings “in regard to Market Conditions and Manufacturing Tendencies, Banking, Export, Import, Customs Policy, Trade Treaties, Transportation, Labor Questions, Raw Materials, Money Exchange, Stock Market, Produce Market, Statistics, Public and Industrial Loans, Foreign Trade Relations etc.” All of these subjects were arranged typographically in sequence to form a question; “only through the” formed its period in the advertisement, leading the reader’s eye to a bold, underlined “*Wirtschaftsdienst*”: “Published by Wirtschaftsdienst G.m.b.H., Hamburg 36: Free Sample Copy on Application.”

The *Wirtschaftsdienst* advertisement in the N&A, one of several attempts on the part of Keynes and Kurt Singer to influence international public opinion surrounding German reparations policy in the wake of the flawed Treaty of Versailles, was a well-intentioned

effort. It was also in some respects a parallel exchange: simultaneously, Singer's journal was advertising Keynes's N&A to German readers. However, it exemplifies one aspect of a utopian Bloomsbury project of the 1920s that – although its failure only became legible by hindsight in the 1930s – went badly awry.¹

Keynes has usually been figured as “prescient” about the historical causation of World War Two, thanks to his 1919 polemic, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. A counterargument, raised initially by Etienne Mantoux and revived by Margaret MacMillan, figures Keynes as a dupe of Germany, playing into the hands of the post-Weimar regime with his arguments against reparations.² Both of these historical perspectives, whether valorizing or excoriating Keynes, largely ignore his subsequent, iterative revisiting of the Treaty and its aftermath over the course of fourteen years, and the role that Keynes's embeddedness in Bloomsbury's print culture played in furthering critical discourse around reparations policy in Germany, as well as in Britain and the United States.

Section One of this chapter situates the N&A in the context of Bloomsbury's networks of print culture and its varying experiments with anonymity as a vehicle for narrative innovation and sociocultural intervention. Section Two examines Keynes's successive revisitings of the German reparations question, in repeated collaboration with his democratic Weimar counterparts – a historical sequence that, in many respects, exemplifies the promise and utility of the Bloomsbury method for responding to ever-shifting factual complexity. Section Three, conversely, interrogates factual gaps and aporias, including Kurt

¹ Kurt Singer, the son of a Jewish businessman, fled Germany, taking up a post at the Imperial University in Tokyo in 1933 (Scheffold 188). *Wirtschaftsdienst*, now a peer-reviewed economic policy journal and an official publication of the German National Library of Economics, is still published by Springer, under the title *Wirtschaftsdienst: Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftspolitik*.

² Christine Froula has recently noted MacMillan's critical perspective on Keynes, observing *inter alia* that the causes of World War Two were complex, during a plenary talk on “War, Peace, Internationalism: The Legacy of Bloomsbury,” given at the International Virginia Woolf Society's Virginia Woolf and the Common(wealth) Reader: The 23rd Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf (Vancouver, British Columbia, June 9, 2013).

Singer's involvement with Weimar's Stefan George-Kreis (George Circle), of which Keynes was apparently unaware. Advertising in each other's journals, Keynes, as publisher and sometimes-anonymous contributor to *The Nation and Athenaeum*, and Singer, as publisher and contributor to *Wirtschaftsdienst*, which also printed translations of Keynes's articles, circulated their ideas about German reparations across international borders. But, in conjunction with a kind of "misreading" across two increasingly diverging cultures, these efforts led to failure in unforeseen ways by the 1930s. For some factions during the complex modernity of the Weimar years, as historian Peter Gay phrases it, "song was substituted for thought" (69).³ Conversely, the assumption that rationality should be foregrounded in political discourse was a strongly held value for Bloomsbury between the wars. This assumption became – temporarily, yet for too long – a premise that obscured Keynes's assessment of rhetorical risks as he engaged in the circulation of ideas through publication networks in the late Weimar Republic. In this particular context, a certain kind of intellectual arrogance appears to have impeded Keynes's capacity for accurate "translation" across cultures, as late Weimar's fragile experiment in democracy gave way to fascism.

Section Four contrasts Leonard Woolf's early recognition of the severity of political crisis in Germany, dating initially from his work with Insel Verlag on Rilke translations in 1933 and confirmed by his critique of fascism in the 1935 polemic, *Quack, Quack!* Section Four also considers Woolf's difficulties in getting those facts accepted in England, particularly with respect to the rapidly worsening realities of anti-Semitism in Germany. In conclusion, Chapter Four argues for continuities between a more historically specific reading

³ For historical analyses of the complex political, economic and cultural circumstances influencing crisis and change in the Weimar Republic, see especially Detlev Peukert's *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (1991) and Eric D. Weitz's *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (2007); see also Peter Fritzsche's *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (1990); *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, edited by Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (1994); and *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, edited by Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (2010).

of Keynes's experiments in print culture as a vehicle for influencing reparations policy and his pragmatic reassessment of "Old Bloomsbury's" ideals and superseded certainties in his 1938 address to Bloomsbury's Memoir Club, "My Early Beliefs."

I. Editing *The Nation*: "Anon" and Bloomsbury's Economies of Influence

Bloomsbury's writers repeatedly privileged anonymity, and both E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf praised "anon" and "anonymity" in eponymous essays. "[E]ven so late as the nineteenth century," Virginia Woolf writes in *Room*, anonymity – sometimes in the form of pseudonymity, as for "Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand," was admittedly "dictated" to women by convention (52). But if "[a]nonymity runs in their blood" (52), one persisting consequence – not necessarily the worst – is that women writers "are not even now as concerned about the health of their fame as men are, and, speaking generally, will pass a tombstone or a signpost without feeling an irresistible desire to cut their names on it" (52). Over a decade later, in "Anon," foregrounding the role of communal affect, Woolf expands on her earlier conception of anonymity: "Every body shared in the emotion of Anons song and supplied the story. [...] Anon is sometimes man; sometimes woman" ("Anon" 382). For Forster, in "Anonymity: An Enquiry" published by the Hogarth Press in 1926, anonymity, as a quality that is characteristic of literature, enables the expression of a vague, unconsciously-inflected "new standard of truth" (82).

Paradoxically, for Woolf, anonymity conferred the potential for a kind of unchecked power: "Anon had great privileges. He was not responsible. He was not self conscious. He is not self conscious. He can borrow. He can repeat. He can say what everyone feels." ("Anon" 397). But Woolf claimed that this potential had gone from the modern world: "The audience is replaced by the reader. Anon is dead" (398). In fact, Woolf and Forster had arguably

modest immediate aims for “anon,” compared with Keynes in his role as majority shareholder of the *Nation and Athenaeum*. In March 1923, Keynes became chairman of the board of the N&A, and over the course of the next decade, many Bloomsburyites contributed to that weekly periodical, with Keynes himself writing 155 pieces of varying lengths for the N&A, “some of them anonymous or under the pseudonym ‘Siela’” (Dostaler 280). With respect to the problem of German reparations, Keynes’s “anon” sometimes sought to say not “what everyone feels” but what, in Keynes’s expert opinion, everyone *should* feel, and then act upon.

“Anon” as semi-legible or wholly obscured contributor to the N&A could anticipate an enviably influential and in-the-know audience, one that not only read but spread the word. Hermione Lee recaps a letter from Vanessa Bell to Roger Fry in 1923: “Talked a great deal about the Nation. It seems to me like a drug. Everyone reads it and discusses it in and out and theres [sic] always a lot of gossip about each article or review – one is quite out of it if one hasnt [sic] seen it for some weeks as I generally havent.” (Lee 440-41, citing VB to RF, 29 December, 1923). Bloomsbury in the back of the magazine offered a kind of cultural imprimatur that added resonance to the economic and political arguments promulgated in the front.

Keynes’s juxtaposition of political, economic and cultural content in the N&A expanded Bloomsbury’s networks of influence, but also reinforced non-Bloomsburyites’ grounds for coterie complaint. Analyzing the initial “subscription” of the Hogarth Press, Elizabeth Willson Gordon concludes that this opened the Press to outsiders’ critique as elitist, even as it served to create a perception and reality of market value.⁴ Competing

⁴ As Gordon observes: “The early circulation was largely among friends and acquaintances. Often the same people were buyers, reviewers and authors, forming a community. The charge of insularity has often been levelled against Bloomsbury in general and, at times, against the Hogarth Press in particular.” (Gordon 121-22).

measures of value and return are associated with Keynes's project as publisher of the N&A. Keynes's financial losses subsidized gains in the N&A's circulation, and also in the perceived credibility of its political and economic ideas. The analysis becomes doubly complicated when we take into account Leonard Woolf's multiple roles as literary editor of Keynes's periodical, and publisher and owner of the Hogarth Press.⁵

Pierre Bourdieu theorizes that art "demonstrates its authenticity," thereby creating symbolic capital – which eventually morphs into economic capital – by means of its "disinterestedness," which can be shown "by the fact that it brings in no income" (40). Lawrence Rainey, among others, has interrogated questions of valuation and deferred consumption within the context of modernist small press and little magazine print culture (43). In the specific context of Bloomsbury, Patrick Collier finds both the N&A and Keynes's later periodical project, *The New Statesman*, to be "not primarily commercial; their copy price and advertising practices' symbolic function – asserting a position in a hierarchy of periodicals – were as significant as the (insufficient) revenue they generated" (159). Collier notes that in 1923, when Keynes acquired the N&A, it was a losing concern that had "long been subsidized" by its previous owners (159). Keynes became essentially a patron, not only of the periodical itself, but of Leonard while he served as literary editor, and following his resignation in 1926, of Virginia: "Keynes remained in place until 1929, and during those

⁵ For example, Sanja Bahun notes: "The publication of Freud's papers, the proofs of which [Leonard] Woolf handled with studied disinterestedness (L3 119), occasioned three under-discussed yet vital debates on the pages of *The Nation and Athenaeum*" (Bahun 95). The first of these occurred in 1924, following Roger Fry's critique of Freud in an address to the British Psychological Society; the second, in 1925, involved Alix and James Strachey's translations of Freud; and the third, in 1928, concerned questions of psychoanalysis and sexuality. The 1925 debate took place from June to October, and was begun by Arthur Tansley's favorable (but, according to Alix Strachey, insufficiently favorably placed) review of the Hogarth Press volumes. See Chapter One for a more extensive discussion of coverage of the Hogarth Press's Freud translations in the *Nation and Athenaeum*.

years the N&A remained by far the leading publisher of Virginia Woolf's journalism. She was, in essence, patronized by Keynes in those years" (159-60).

The N&A was not only a tastemaker, but a periodical that attempted to influence economic and political policy. Skidelsky observes that Keynes, in "tak[ing] on this huge extra chore" (Vol II 136) "was a man with a message, or rather a double message: to stop the return to the gold standard and to get a sane settlement of reparations. He was a preacher who needed a pulpit" (137). Roger E. Backhouse and Bradley W. Bateman also describe how Keynes's political and economic policy goals influenced his publishing endeavor: "In 1922 he became involved in the takeover of the journal *Nation and Athenaeum*, ruthlessly pushing out the representatives of the [Oxford-centric, New Liberal] Summer School movement [...] Keynes made it an organ of Cambridge economics (including many of his pieces on policy) and Bloomsbury" (Backhouse and Bateman 12).

Given these objectives, authorship by "anon," for Keynes in the N&A, figures essentially as a kind of mirror image to what Virginia Woolf would envision in *Three Guineas* as a Society of Outsiders' anonymously authored and freely scattered pamphlets. Keynes, when he took charge of the paper and installed Leonard Woolf as literary editor, could count on a culturally and politically influential audience; he could introduce selected contributors to that audience; and he could expand the paper's influence, not only beyond Bloomsbury but beyond England's borders.

For example, archival materials at King's College, Cambridge (KCKP), reveal that, early in 1923, Keynes corresponded with a liberal counterpart in the United States, James G. McDonald of the Foreign Policy Association.⁶ The FPA was an influential liberal group in

⁶ Keynes's correspondence with James G. McDonald continued for approximately two years. On April 25, 1924, McDonald sent Keynes a note of introduction for "Miss Lillian D. Wald, a member of our Executive Committee...hoping that she may have an opportunity to talk over with you some of the aspects of the

the United States, whose National Council included Jane Addams, John Dewey, and Felix Frankfurter. McDonald wrote to Keynes on January 15, 1923 about the “present crisis” concerning reparations (King’s NS/1/1/3), expressing worries about a lack of official cooperation between the United Kingdom and the United States. He enclosed recent correspondence from Senator William E. Borah, who, he thought, “despite his previous irreconcilability, is coming to have a much broader point of view” (NS/1/1/3). McDonald noted in particular Borah’s power of “arousing great public enthusiasm by appeals to the moral conscience of the people” (NS/1/1/3).

Replying on February 1, 1923, Keynes expressed his agreement that the two countries must be impelled to “act unitedly.” Only in this way, he concluded, could they “hope to intervene with effect; whereas each country by itself will be as nearly as possible helpless” (King’s NS/1/1/13). Keynes then made an offer, in his capacity as incoming publisher of the N&A, inviting “pieces of news and impressions.” These, Keynes reassured McDonald, could and should be anonymous:

My idea would be not to publish anything over your own name, or indeed in your own words, but I think that the kind of information you have sent me sometimes would be very useful to the English public if it were made the basis for a

economic situation in Western Europe” (NS/1/1/140). But on October 4, 1924, Keynes appears to have precipitated a breach by requesting from McDonald the address list for the Foreign Policy Association. He noted that “[w]e are now, for the first time, making a concerted effort to introduce ‘The Nation’ to American readers” (NS/1/1/142). Alternatively, Keynes proposed, if the FPA address list needed to be kept confidential, N&A promotional material might instead be sent to the FPA, to be forwarded from there at the N&A’s expense (NS/1/1/142). After a month’s delay, on November 8, 1924, the FPA’s Secretary wrote to Keynes, declining these requests on the ground that a rule limited use of the list to the FPA’s membership, and the Executive Committee “felt they could not make an exception in your case” (NS/1/1/205). The absence of later correspondence suggests that the FPA’s refusal may have closed the attempted collaboration between Keynes and McDonald. This would prove an unfortunate missed opportunity by the mid-1930s, since McDonald, who served as chairman of the FPA from 1919 to 1933, became League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1933. By pretending sympathy with former German contacts, McDonald gained a thorough awareness of the extent and dangers of anti-Semitism in the early years of the Hitler regime. Resigning due to the League’s lack of funding for and cooperation with refugee efforts in 1935, he drafted a widely-circulated letter denouncing the Nazi government; in 1949, he became the United States’s first full Ambassador to Israel. (Lehmann Library, Columbia University – Papers of James G. McDonald)

paragraph. [...] I am hopeful that in the way I suggest I might be able to help very much in giving suitable and effective publication in this country to the ideas of your Association. (NS/1/13).

Thus, like many of the Woolfs' and Keynes's own articles, non-Bloomsbury contributions to the N&A – including and sometimes especially the politically inflected ones, and including the ones that came not only from outside Bloomsbury but from outside Britain – need not always be signed. The first issue of the paper under Keynes's control, on May 5, 1923, set forth the new Bloomsbury organ's editorial aims and objectives in some detail, but (perhaps understandably, and with the best of literary and pragmatic intentions) it omitted to acknowledge this point.

II. Revis(it)ing the Versailles Treaty: Harcourt, Macmillan, and *The Nation and Athenaeum*

Keynes returned, with persistent commitment for over a decade, to the policy dilemmas surrounding German reparations and the Treaty of Versailles as transnational economic and political facts developed and changed. From the outset, he signaled this approach by foregrounding complexity, and not undue certainty or absolutism, in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919). Even as he attacks the Treaty and caricatures its makers in that initial polemic, he cautions: “in so complex a phenomenon the prognostics do not all point one way; and we may make the error of expecting consequences to follow too swiftly and too inevitably from what perhaps are not *all* the relevant causes” (252).

By the early fall of 1919, Keynes had finished the manuscript for *Economic Consequences*. A number of friends and acquaintances read chapters in proof or heard them,

including Carl Melchior.⁷ E. M. Forster captured Keynes's, and Bloomsbury's, perspective on the events of Versailles and Keynes's first polemic a year and a half later, noting in his "Locked Diary" that, on February 4, 1921, Keynes "read his Peace Treaty reminiscences at the Memoir Club" (62). Following Keynes's resignation from the Treasury, Forster recounted: "Months later, as unfettered friends, they [Keynes and Melchior] met in Holland, and K. showed Melchior the proofs of his chapter on Wilson & ct. M. was depressed. Not wickedness had destroyed the Fatherland. On that side as on this had been muddle." ("Locked Diary" 63).⁸

Moggridge notes in his biography of Keynes that Melchior's business associate Paul Warburg also heard the chapter. Both men met with Keynes in October 1919 in Amsterdam; as Moggridge reports, Keynes took Warburg's suggestion to tone down his portraits of the Versailles *dramatis personae* somewhat (Moggridge 322-23). Moggridge also observes that their October 1919 meeting opened to Keynes access to the highest levels of German government (354-56) – at least during Melchior's lifetime. Their last visit was in 1932; Melchior died in 1933.

Harvard law professor Felix Frankfurter had also attended the Versailles conference, as a representative of the Zionist movement (Moggridge 321). Frankfurter, after reading Keynes's chapter on the Versailles negotiations, contacted the new publishing house of Harcourt Brace and Howe to arrange publication of *Economic Consequences* in the United States. (Moggridge 321 and n.15; KCKP, Frankfurter to JMK, 12 September 1919).

⁷ A former lawyer for M. M. Warburg & Co., the private German bank, Melchior had resigned from the German contingent after Keynes's own departure from Paris but before the Treaty was finalized.

⁸ Forster summarized, from this Memoir Club retrospective, that Keynes, "by breaking through the official atmosphere reached Dr. Melchior, their Jewish leader, and averted disaster. I have neither the experience nor the memory to record the details of this fascinating intrigue, in which everyone, including Keynes himself, was partly false and partly honest, and in which it was the task of humanity to estimate the proportion between the parts" ("Locked Diary" 62).

Although Macmillan was Keynes's primary publisher in England, as Willis has described in detail (217-220),⁹ Keynes's general practice was to negotiate on his own behalf all foreign rights for his works. He typically chose to carry all costs for production, distribution and advertising, and to keep all profits after royalties to the publisher.¹⁰ Keynes was also routinely very hands-on – “micromanaging” is not too strong a word – regarding publicity and advertising, especially with Macmillan. But he was also open to advice, and in the process of shaping a second book-length iteration on the German reparations issue, Harcourt would play a major role.

Keynes's first and most famous polemic on Versailles proved a tremendous international success. Virginia Woolf recorded in her *Diary* that *Economic Consequences* sold 15,000 copies within the first two months (Vol 2:18). In the United States, for Alfred Harcourt's and Donald Brace's then-new publishing company,¹¹ *Economic Consequences* was “[t]he book that made the firm's early reputation and finances” (Bornstein, *Colors of Zion* 169). Publishing networks interconnected in the United States, as well: Walter Lippmann of the *New Republic*, which would reprint many of Keynes's articles from the N&A, was also associated with Harcourt (Skidelsky, Vol. II 321-22). Keynes would establish a regular arrangement with the *New Republic* in the 1920s; a November 13, 1924 letter, acknowledging and thanking Keynes for an article, commented: “We are always extremely glad to have an opportunity of publishing anything you write for the Nation” (KCKP: NS/1/1/206).

⁹ See Willis 217-20. Willis notes: “Macmillan, from first to last, published all of Keynes's books in England, as did Harcourt Brace in America. Leonard Woolf and the Hogarth Press could not hope to publish Keynes's books, but the shorter works were different. It is a mark of Woolf's relationship with Keynes that on the rare occasion when Keynes published in pamphlet form, he turned to the Hogarth Press” (220).

¹⁰ KCKP: EC 1/4.

¹¹ Harcourt, Brace & Howe was founded in 1919, and became Harcourt, Brace & Co. in 1921.

Economic Consequences was also translated into several languages, including German. Keynes's book publisher in Germany, Duncker & Humblot, would continue in that role from 1920 through his 1936 publication of the *General Theory*. As Keynes wrote in a September 30, 1938 to Harold Macmillan, seeking assistance for ex-Duncker & Humblot contact Dr. Ludwig Feuchtwanger (who had been forced out of the firm in 1936): "Feuchtwanger has been for many years past, not a partner I believe, but the spiritual director, so to speak, of Duncker & Humblot, and, under his inspiration and enlightened guidance, they have been, as it were, the Macmillans of Germany" (British Library, Macmillan/Keynes Correspondence, Vol. IV: 1938-1946).

Following Keynes's groundbreaking sales with *Economic Consequences*, the political and economic circumstances influencing the implementation of the Treaty were not static. Keynes was intent upon revisiting and responding in print to the changing historical context, and he stated repeatedly in his correspondence with Macmillan his hopes to "revise" *Economic Consequences*. But it was Harcourt that took greater initiative in shaping Keynes's strategy for renewed advocacy about German reparations. Alfred Harcourt, in a June 21, 1921 letter to Keynes (KCKP: RP/6/1), advised: "We have some 7,000 sheets of the present edition. We would gladly pulp those for a revised edition, but we would do so more gladly for a new book which would practically supersede them." Such a book would both respond to changing historical facts – "Haven't events in the realms you discussed in "The Economic Consequences of the Peace" progressed far enough to justify a restatement of the matter? It isn't so important to say "I told you so," as it is to tell the public how things are now..." – but, especially, "if I know anything about the reading habits of the American public, very few would take the trouble to see what you said in what was called a revised

edition. They would depend on the reviews to give them the drift of your revisions, but would not buy and read for themselves what you have to say.”

An American audience would, Harcourt believed, “read a restatement of the current international economic situation from your pen... and with some curiosity as to how far your new statements modified or substantiated your earlier ones.” Keynes replied on August 3, 1921 (KCKP RP/6/2-3): “I...recognise that there is much force in what you say. I shall probably take your advice and prepare, instead of my proposed revision of “The Economic Consequences”, a small volume of what might be called ‘Essays Supplementary to The Economic Consequences of the Peace’.”

He turned in the manuscript in early fall of 1921,¹² but with a different proposed title. Donald Brace, by letter of October 19, 1921 (KCKP RP/6/10), continued to offer advice about the American market: “I know from the talk I had with you that it will not be easy to find another title, but we do feel that “German Reparation” is rather completely unalluring.” Keynes replied on November 2, 1921 (KCKP RP/6/11): “I quite agree with what you say in your letter of October 19th about how unsatisfactory my original title was. My latest idea is A Revision of the Treaty, being a sequel to The Economic Consequences of the Peace. How does this strike you?” Harcourt had raised additional questions about marketing, and to these, Keynes responded in the same letter: “The important chapter, which is likely to attract public attention, is the last one on the Revision of the Treaty. I propose in this chapter to make some pretty far-reaching and definite suggestions for the

¹² This new book, in lieu of a new edition, inaugurated a publication strategy that Keynes would usually continue to follow. In a letter to Daniel Macmillan of March 18, 1939 (KCKP BP/1/40), he commented: “Yes, I should like a further reprint of my General Theory. If I were having a new edition, there are a certain number of corrections which ought to be made. But, as you know, my practice is not to have second editions. When I have something further to say, I would rather have a new book.”

settlement of the whole business. In advertising, this is the part to which to draw special attention.”

A Revision of the Treaty was published late in 1921, and was translated into French, German, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, Japanese and Russian (*CW*, Vol III xiv). In a December 1921 Preface to *Revision*, Keynes emphasized the book’s iterative quality, noting that he had aimed “to collect together in this Sequel the corrections and additions which the flow of events makes necessary, together with my reflections on the present facts” (*CW*, Vol III xv). The title might no longer be “German Reparation,” but he stated in the Preface: “My object is a strictly limited one, namely, to provide facts and materials for an intelligent review of the reparations problem, as it now is” (*CW*, Vol III xv). Importantly, Keynes softened – at least for the moment – his dire predictions from *Economic Consequences*: “Many of the misfortunes which I predicted as attendant on the execution of the reparations chapter have not occurred, because no serious attempt has been made to execute it” (116). But “The Treaty, though unexecuted, is not revised” (117), and aspects concerning “currency regulation, public finance, and the foreign exchanges, remains nearly as bad as it ever was. [...] In most European countries [...] inflation continues and the international value of their currencies are fluctuating and uncertain” (117). Thus, at this point, Keynes was emphasizing inflation as a serious problem, but he was not yet predicting the extremes of the Weimar hyperinflation crisis – rather, he attempted in *Revision* to make policy suggestions that might mitigate postwar inflation in “most European countries” (117).¹³

¹³ A selection from *Essays in Persuasion*, “The Change of Opinion,” was subsequently adapted from chapter 1 of *Revision*, which had been titled “The State of Opinion.” In *Essays in Persuasion*, Keynes emphasized the alteration in public opinion that had come about since *Economic Consequences* had been drafted: “there can be no doubt as to the immense change in public sentiment over the past two years. [...] the reparation chapter of the Treaty of Versailles is crumbling. There is little prospect now of the disastrous consequences of its fulfillment” (*CW*, Vol IX 33).

When he communicated with Duncker & Humblot about the German translation of *Revision*, Keynes advised Duncker & Humblot, as Harcourt had advised him, with an eye to circulation. By letter dated November 2, 1921 (KCKP RP/8/45), Keynes offered *Revision* to D&H, noting: “The part of the book which is most likely to attract public attention is the last chapter, in which I shall make some far-reaching proposals for the revision of the Treaty, especially as regards Reparation.” Implicitly, “public attention” here meant the German public’s attention. Keynes proposed the following terms in this letter: “I offer you the German Rights of this book in return for a royalty of 20% of the published price on the first 5,000 copies sold and 25% thereafter, the expenses of translation being defrayed by yourselves.” Duncker & Humblot negotiated further, by letter of November 7, 1921 (KCKP RP/8/46-48), and on November 11, 1921 (KCKP RP/8/49), Keynes accepted their terms, which also secured a competent translator: “I appreciate the importance of a proper remuneration for the translator, and accordingly I accept the terms as now proposed by you. [...] I presume that in view of the great fall in the value of the mark you will be publishing this volume at a materially higher price than in the case of my previous book.” As he had for his English-language publishers, Keynes requested D&H, by letter dated January 19, 1922 (KCKP RP/8/63), to send presentation copies “with the compliments of the author” to several individuals, mostly German economists, but also including Max Warburg.

The German mark valuation crisis continued to worsen. Keynes corresponded with D&H about several matters on December 20, 1922 (KCKP BP/4/7-8). This letter, like his correspondence with Harcourt, evinces a collaborative approach to shaping future work – here, potentially incorporating current journalism that had followed *Revision*, even as *Revision* had drawn upon articles that had followed *Economic Consequences* – and with a view to circulation outside of England’s borders. He noted first the plummeting value of the mark:

“Thank you for your letter of the 17th October with reference to my second book [*Revision*]. In the present stage of the Mark Exchange, it is hardly worth while for you to remit the sum that you mention is due, and I may as well leave it in your hands for the present.” Keynes next declined to prepare a “new edition” of *Revision* himself (this was in an exchange context where achieving a good circulation would, as with Harcourt, have been a goal, but economic return, given the value of the currency, would have been doubtful). Still, he made alternative suggestions for the German publisher’s consideration:

I have been considering rather carefully your suggestion that it might be worth while to have a re-issue of “A Revision of the Treaty”, brought up to date by the addition of some more novel matter. I have dealt with the Reparation Question, since the publication of the book, in several newspaper articles. But I do not feel disposed to open up the whole subject again, or to do anything fresh. Since my first book, “The Economic Consequences of the Peace”, is now out of print you might possibly think it worth while to consider a composite volume made up of those parts which are of most permanent interest in the two books, together with one or two more recent articles, so that the whole thing would give a conspectus [sic] of the Reparation Question from its beginning down to the present day. This, however, might not fit in very well with your plan of utilizing the spare copies in sheets of the second book.

But if you do not like this idea, which I could elaborate on in more detail if you do like it, I do not see what I can suggest, except to offer you for republication, together with the stuff already in print, my latest considered contribution on the subject, which appeared in the 8th of the Special “Manchester Guardian” supplements on Reconstruction in Europe. I send you, under separate cover, copy of the German edition of this.

If you would care to print this article as a supplement to the sheets you already have in print, and re-issue the whole as a new edition, you are welcome to do so.

How much of the “change” of public opinion that occurred between *Economic Consequences* and *Revision*, particularly across European borders, was attributable to Keynes’s

polemical intervention, as distinct from other factors such as the passage of time dulling the Allies' postwar appetite for "making Germany pay," has been the subject of much debate.¹⁴ Christine Froula notes that during the Versailles negotiations, "Keynes had urged the Allied leaders to embrace internationalist policies that would promote Europe's welfare as a whole, not enrich some nations at others' expense" (*Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde* 104). To date, those who have examined the question have focused primarily on Keynes's *Economic Consequences*, not on his fourteen years of iterative reparations writings that followed, and they have largely neglected a print culture analysis of Keynes's reparations advocacy project.

The assumption that rationality should be foregrounded in political discourse was a strongly held value for Bloomsbury between the wars. However, with respect to reparations, Keynes's "anon" was not, *pace* Virginia Woolf, simply repeating words that expressed what the listeners of his "village" already thought. Rather, with undue assurance and sometimes with intellectual arrogance, Keynes single-handedly (albeit with the best of intentions) declaimed what *he* thought they should think. The evolving debates surrounding reparations were, from the outset, publicly and politically resonant, yet complex and technical, and therefore difficult for a lay public to evaluate. Keynes's polemical rhetoric, beginning with *Economic Consequences*, and carrying forward in *Revision* and his subsequent journalism,

¹⁴ Economic historian Gerald D. Feldman notes, with respect to this question, that the Allies invited Germany to submit its own reparations proposals in the spring of 1920; "On March 1, Privy Councillor Kempner of the Reich Chancellery and Undersecretary Hans Albert presented the Cabinet with a memorandum aimed at encouraging a German initiative." They found the "changing attitudes toward the treaty terms outside France" relevant, and "The growing influence of Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* was their key piece of evidence, but they could also cite numerous criticisms of the treaty" by international experts and leaders. On March 3, the German government leadership reached a "consensus that the old hundred billion gold-mark offer was invalidated by circumstances and that the Keynes book had created a new situation as well" (206). But Feldman also cautions, regarding *Economic Consequences* and its international reception: "If the book fell on fertile ground, this did not mean the seeds had sprouted or that the sprouts would blossom in quite the way desired by the Germans. It was one thing to be disenchanted by the Treaty, another to be captivated by the German case" (310).

particularly but not limited to the N&A, was drafted in this context. His target audiences were both specialist and generalist, and they crossed national borders.

Etienne Mantoux, a French historian, strongly criticized Keynes in his own polemic, *The Carthaginian Peace, or the Economic Consequences of Mr. Keynes*. Mantoux's work was drafted during World War Two and published posthumously in 1946. He argued that Germany could and should have been made to pay full reparations, placing blame in hindsight on Keynes for giving support to those who wanted to claim that Germany had been treated too harshly under the terms of the Treaty, and thus weakening the British government's ability to counter Hitler in the 1930s. More recently, historian Margaret MacMillan has caricatured Keynes in terms reminiscent of his own cameos of political leaders in *Economic Consequences*,¹⁵ and has attempted to revive Mantoux's line of critique. For MacMillan, like Mantoux, Keynes's *Economic Consequences* undermined the Allies' authority and encouraged both Weimar Germany and the Nazis to flout the Versailles treaty, not only with respect to reparations but disarmament. Further, argues MacMillan, Keynes's arguments meshed dangerously with a prevailing German perception that their country had not really been "defeated" in World War One, and was therefore grievously wronged by the terms of the Paris Peace Conference (479).

Martin Harries, citing Mantoux, sums up the dilemmas inherent in attempting to weigh Keynes's historical impact in the wake of Versailles: "The reception of the *Economic Consequences* is notable not only for the suggestion that Keynes showed remarkable foresight in predicting what might be the outcome of the Versailles Treaty but for another, equally

¹⁵ For example: "A very clever, rather ugly young man, he had sailed through Eton and Cambridge, collecting prizes and attention. His membership in the Bloomsbury circle only enhanced his propensity to moral superiority. He was a terrifying subordinate because he never bothered to hide his contempt for virtually all his superiors" (MacMillan 181).

powerful, note. Such was Keynes's influence, some argue, that his work became a key component in the policy of appeasement that encouraged Nazi aggression" (153). For Harries: "On the one hand, the work appears as a prophetic warning that, if heeded, might have helped prevent the Nazi rise to power. On the other hand, it is read as fuel for appeasement, as a cause of that very rise" (153). Harries notes further that "accusations of a pro-German bias dogged Keynes from the moment of publication. The *Economic Consequences*, then, is marked by a history of extraordinarily contradictory attributions of powerful agency" (153).

Only one fact seems beyond doubt, when Keynes's later reparations work is brought into the analysis, as I would argue that it must be for an accurate assessment: Ten or fifteen years later, no propagandist could, in good faith, have quoted or relied upon Keynes's 1919 polemic as a static document, unglossed by subsequent historical developments and later polemical versions and revisions. Yet, by the early 1930s, that kind of ethical constraint as a limit to propaganda held no force. And the events that Keynes sought to forestall in the 1920s nonetheless shaped a culture of the late Weimar Republic in which this was increasingly, and perhaps inevitably, the case.¹⁶

Despite Keynes's measuredly optimistic language in *Revision*, circumstances soon changed for the worse as inflation in Germany accelerated and the value of the German mark was placed in jeopardy. In the aftermath of a stay in Berlin to participate in the Wirth Commission's attempt to stabilize the German mark, Keynes wrote to Melchior on November 17, 1922, seeking insight about the current German government: "Their lack of

¹⁶ For more in-depth analysis of German reparations advocacy issues and surrounding historical contexts, encompassing the question of eventual inevitability, see Patricia Clavin's *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (2013); Zara Steiner's *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (2005) and *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939* (2013); and Adam Tooze's *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (2007).

psychological flair seemed to me to be only equalled by their lack of technical competence” (CW, Vol. XVIII 65). He then speculated that its replacement “would be, in the first instance, a government a little more to the right than was Wirth’s, and a little more under industrialistic influences; but that such a government cannot survive for long” (CW, Vol. XVIII 65).¹⁷ It would, he thought, “be succeeded by something looking primarily to Socialistic support” (CW, Vol. XVIII 65). He conveyed to Melchior the “very good publicity in England” that their report to the Wirth commission had drawn, and enclosed clippings from *The Times* and *The Financial Times* reflecting this (CW, Vol. XVIII 65).

On December 1, 1922, after the Wirth government had fallen, Keynes wrote to Melchior, “I think you will hardly find a prominent politician in England who is not astonished and dismayed at the extraordinary weakness of the German government” (CW, Vol. XVIII 87). Expressing his hopes that incoming Chancellor Wilhelm Cuno “might be going to form a government of all the best elements in Germany” (CW, Vol. XVIII 87), he inquired of Melchior: “But, from the small knowledge I possess, the Cabinet he has collected together looks a wretched affair. Am I right, or not?” (CW, Vol. XVIII 87).

Keynes continued to correspond frankly with Melchior, and in short order he was attempting to advise Cuno from across the English Channel. The editors of Keynes’s *Collected Works* note that, although Keynes typically retained carbons of his correspondence, he omitted to keep copies of some of these letters (some, but not all, were supplied by the Warburg family for inclusion in the *Collected Works*) (CW, Vol XVIII xiii, 116, 119, 141). By

¹⁷ Feldman explains that the experts ended up divided, although Chancellor Karl Joseph Wirth “emphasized the criticism of Versailles” in the Keynes faction’s report (485). Wirth resigned the Chancellorship in November 1922. As Feldman analyzes the context in his treatise on the Weimar era: “the fall of Wirth reflected the deep division that hyperinflation had opened up in the relations between industry and labor and the increasing rigidification of their positions on the central problems of inflation and reparations. [...] It can also be argued that Keynes, Bonn, Hirsch, Hilferding, and Bernhard were all fighting for a viable alternative that might have worked and that was very much worth risking in the light of what was happening and what was to follow” (489).

January 1923, Melchior was forwarding extracts from Keynes's letters to Cuno (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 116, 119); on January 20, Melchior wrote to Cuno: "I continue to send you extracts from my correspondence with Keynes, the more so as I am quite convinced that his letters, even though addressed to me, are not intended exclusively for me" (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 119). Melchior was also supplying data to Keynes; a May 10 letter from Keynes remains missing (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 141), but Melchior's reply of May 14 states: "I shall try to find a suitable man who could supply you with the information you want" (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 141) – this "information" would logically have been intended, if possibly among other purposes, for use in the N&A, now newly under Keynes's control.

As the Weimar hyperinflation accelerated, Keynes's involvement with Germany intensified. He visited Berlin and met with German government officials repeatedly; simultaneously, he advocated for their position in the N&A. Reparations policy, wrote Keynes in the May 5, 1923 issue, had been misguided since the outset: "The injury inflicted on Europe by the grand reparation legend is incalculable. Looking back, we can see that the policy pursued from 1919 to 1922, of steadily reducing the dimensions of the legend, but of never abandoning it in favour of the plain truth, has not worked well" (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 132). As Moggridge summarizes: "In the *Nation*, both anonymously and over his own signature, and in other contributions to the press, Keynes tried to encourage Britain to end its policy of quasi-neutrality, to break with France...and to offer some encouragement to Germany" (387).

On May 16, 1923, Keynes "addressed the following letter, marked 'Private', from King's College, Cambridge, to Chancellor Cuno" (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 143). It suggested: "Any further reply you may make to Lord Curzon can have no object except to affect favourable British and American opinion. It may be useless to say anything. But I venture,

very humbly, to enclose a suggestion of the line which a further reply might take. I have shown this suggestion to no one” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 144). Enclosed was a “Suggested German Reply to Lord Curzon.” This specified in some detail, as four numbered items, which of Bonar Law’s reparations proposals Germany was “prepared to accept” or, conversely, “not prepared to undertake” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 144-45).

The “no one” whom Keynes had not shown his “Suggested German Reply” included the British government, at least for the moment. He did inform Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, after the fact, on May 30, 1923 (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 158). The editors of Keynes’s *Collected Works* comment:

Cuno’s answer came through Melchior who wrote to Keynes on 22 May. In this letter Melchior discreetly intimated the lines along which the German government was thinking. Again, there is no copy of Keynes’s letter of 18 May which Melchior mentions. (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 145).

Melchior’s May 22, 1923 letter reported on a meeting with Cuno, and assured Keynes: “I would mention that besides him and myself nobody else knows of this correspondence, and that he is most grateful to you for your letter and your exceedingly important suggestions” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 145). Melchior supplied a lengthy description of Germany’s current negotiating position (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 145-46), and requested Keynes to “telegraph me the word ‘received’, so that I may know this letter has reached you safely” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 147).

The correspondence continued, and on May 26, 1923, Melchior reiterated: “I thank you most cordially for the great trouble you have taken by your lucid and detailed observations, which are of the greatest value to us” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 149) He also noted: “I am studying with pleasure the newest numbers of *The Nation and the Athenaeum*. Unfortunately the number of the 12th of May, in which you wrote about the German offer,

has – presumably owing to some delay in transmission – not yet come to hand” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 149).

On June 9, 1923, the *N&A* ran Keynes’s article, “The Situation in Germany,” which reported on “[t]he fresh collapse of the mark” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 161); in the June 16, 1923 issue, Keynes contributed anonymously to “Events of the Week” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 165), observing: “The new German Note has been received by the British Press with a remarkable unanimity of quiet approval. [...] Everyone agrees that, if our interest is in the economic problem of reparations, the Note offers as fair a basis of negotiation as we can expect” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 165). Commenting that France also presented challenges for Baldwin’s statecraft, he added: “It is a moment when ‘diplomacy’ has vast powers for good or for evil” (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 165).

After the mark valuation crisis passed, Keynes continued to polemicize on reparations policy in the *N&A*. These articles tended to be featured prominently, and they were often accompanied by advance publicity in surrounding issues. In these iterations, responding to current developments in reparations policy and the German economic situation, Keynes continued to foreground polemical rhetoric and vivid figurative language. For example, in *N&A* 38:16 (January 16, 1926), the paper announced: “Mr JM Keynes will contribute an article on ‘Germany’s Coming Problem’.” This promotional material noted further, “Mr Keynes’ recent article on ‘The French Franc’ has been widely quoted and commented on in all the leading papers here and on the Continent.

ORDER YOUR COPY NOW.”

The article itself was highlighted with a headline on the cover in Volume 38, Issue 19 (page 628), and the text (635-36) was replete with Keynes’s characteristically quotable figurative and polemical language – in this instance, about “Jonah” and the “worm of deflation.”

If Germany was often favored by Keynes's arguments on reparations, France – frequently a subject of his criticism – enjoyed similar support when the circumstances warranted. Keynes's first radio broadcast,¹⁸ on January 9, 1925, polemicizing on the subject of "Inter-Allied Debts," raised hackles at the Treasury, since Anglo-French negotiations over France's war debts to England were ongoing at the time. Following informal warnings from old Treasury contacts that went unheeded (Moggridge, *Keynes on the Wireless* 2), Keynes's "text was 'censored at the last moment by the Foreign Office on the ground that my sentiments were pro-French'" (Moggridge, *Keynes on the Wireless* 2). Using language that echoed his warnings in *Economic Consequences*, Keynes declared that if England attempted to collect on its debt from France: "We should just have the German reparation problem over again between each of the former Allies. Hatred, dissension, and – in my belief – not even money would be the result of trying to collect this sum year by year for a generation" (17). Keynes also emphasized the pragmatic point that the debts between England and France "are a matter of politics and not of law or contract. It is as mistaken to treat them as things of contract as it was to treat the...liabilities of Germany under the Treaty of Versailles as things of contract" (14).

Keynes's radio broadcast of January 9 was also published in the January 10 issue of the N&A (10 January 1925, 516-17; *CW* XVIII, 264-68). Keynes delivered a further broadcast on "The War Debts" on May 3, 1928, and this text remained uncensored (Moggridge, *Keynes on the Wireless* 2). Here, with the final figure for German reparations still

¹⁸ Moggridge notes, in his recent compilation of Keynes's radio broadcasts, that as wireless technology developed, Keynes (like Forster and the Woolfs) began to record occasional radio broadcasts – 21 in total through 1945 – all but one of them for the BBC (Moggridge, "Introduction," *Keynes on the Wireless* 1).

unfixed, Keynes argued for revisions to the temporary “Dawes” settlement.¹⁹ The 1928 broadcast also ran as an article in the N&A (5 May 1928, 131-3; *CW* IX, 47-53) and was translated for publication in Germany by *Wirtschaftsdienst* (KCKP: NS/1/2).

Keynes’s repeated attempts to advise, polemicize and intervene in this debate continued for some fourteen years in all, until in 1932 Germany ceased paying reparations (*CW*, Vol. XVIII 379). Melchior died in 1933. Moggridge notes that, as Hitler seized power, Keynes began to worry about future developments in Germany (609), and that he was subsequently silent on German policy questions for almost two years (610).

III. Circulating Questions: Keynes and Weimar Germany

When Melchior died in 1933, this cut off Keynes’s most reliable source for access to information about the late Weimar Republic in political extremis, followed by Adolf Hitler’s rise to power that same year, and the overt anti-Semitism and rapidly increasing disregard for the rule of law that marked Hitler’s consolidation of power in the mid 1930s. Keynes’s strongest early criticism of the Weimar regime in the grip of hyperinflation had been that it was incompetent – a then-accurate assessment. But this characterization would fall far short of the mark as late Weimar struggled to sustain its democratic mandate, and as political and sociocultural developments became intensely troubling by the early 1930s.

Peter Gay notes of the Weimar Republic, “there were really two Germanies: the Germany of military swagger, abject submission to authority, aggressive foreign adventure, and obsessive preoccupation with form, and the Germany of lyrical poetry, Humanist philosophy, and pacific cosmopolitanism” (1). Factionalism in Germany between the wars

¹⁹ Moggridge (*Keynes on the Wireless* 29) summarizes the subsequent history: “The resulting Young Plan came into operation in May 1930. The Lausanne Conference saw the effective end of reparations in July 1932, although Germany did not complete her repayment of the international loans...under the Dawes and Young plans until 1 June 1980.”

was even more complex than the simple binary that Gay posits here: for example, Detlev Peukert characterizes Weimar as an outlier case of the instabilities of political and cultural modernity pushed to an extreme of crisis and unravelling. Although Weimar was “born in defeat, lived in turmoil, and died in disaster” (2), Gay posits that “[t]he end of Weimar was not inevitable because there were republicans who took the symbol of Weimar seriously and who tried, persistently and courageously, to give the ideal real content” (2).

Melchior and Cuno were acutely aware of, and communicated to Keynes in the 1920s, the potential risks from the forces of reaction and anti-Semitism in Germany. For example, on May 14, 1923, Melchior offered Keynes “my personal views on the inner situation in Germany” (*CW* XVIII 142).²⁰ But after Cuno lost power and Melchior had less contact with the German cabinet (*CW* XVIII 221), and especially after Melchior died, that intelligence became more attenuated.

Keynes’s other contacts in Germany, particularly at Duncker & Humblot and at *Wirtschaftsdienst*, were less close personally; however, the print culture networks involving them were robust and well respected – as Keynes expressed it in a 1938 letter to Daniel Macmillan, D&H were “the Macmillans of Germany” (British Library, Macmillan/Keynes Correspondence, Vol. IV: 1938-1946). If Keynes’s voice was intentionally sometimes muted

²⁰ This letter included considerable detail about the current status of political factions in Weimar. Melchior advised Keynes: “The Ruhr invasion and particularly the ever-growing hardships imposed on the population have created with us in Germany a considerably stronger feeling of unity than we have seen since 1918. Only the radicals of the left (Communists) and the radicals of the right (National-Socialists) resist, and these two elements oppose the ‘Einheitsfront’. The National-Socialist movement in Bavaria has been shaken through the dominant party in Bavaria, the Bavarian Centre (the Catholic party) which is monarchistic and much more conservative than the ‘Zentrums-Partei’ in the Reich – which hitherto had favoured the National-Socialists in secret – having now turned against them. This was partly due to the National-Socialists having quite openly armed bands in Munich and in the country and thus endangered the State authority in the highest degree, and partly to the National-Socialists – a main point on whose program is the anti-Semitism -- having on more than one occasion severely attacked Christianity as a Judaisation of Germany, whereby they have, of course, at once aroused antagonism on the part of the Catholic clergy. I do not believe that for the present any commotion from right or left, except perhaps some local disturbances, need be expected. Things would, however, get a different aspect, if the Ruhr action or the international political treatment of the question should lead to a far-reaching breakdown in Germany, in which case, however, I do not consider it impossible that riots will occur from both sides, which may eventually turn out rather sanguinary” (*CW* 142).

in his dealings with the “highest circles” of German government, it was broadcast strongly, to not only an expert but a more general audience, through these latter networks. His publishing connections in Germany relied upon the printed word and formal correspondence, and less upon the personal exchange arising from a shared experience of collaboration at Versailles, which Keynes took as a starting point for his interactions with Melchior and Cuno.

Keynes, via the N&A and his other print culture endeavors, circulated his work on German reparations to a cultural context in Weimar that was complex and, under economic and political pressures, constantly in flux. Peter Gay notes that Weimar style predated the Republic and was cosmopolitan (5-6). Geoff Eley also favors a historical approach that “diminishes the importance of the old chronological markers of German history (1914-18, 1933), encouraging instead a reperiodizing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to stress the coherence of the years between the 1890s and 1930s as a unitary context” (31). Modris Eksteins refers to “the group of mystical nationalists who gained ascendancy in German intellectual circles after the turn of the century and who, following Wagner, tried to spiritualize life by turning it into a quest for beauty.” These included “the poet Stefan George” (79). And Vincent Sherry, observing that Eksteins “makes only glancing reference to an Anglo-American faction” (Sherry 20), finds similarly that a “Teutonic strain” of modernism “celebrates an intellectual ethic quite distinctly opposed to the social rationalism of British liberalism: it is an *emancipatory* impulse” (20).

Schefold concludes that Keynes, who referred to Kurt Singer, founder of the *Wirtschaftsdienst*, in print as “two foot by five, the mystical economist from Hamburg” (Keynes, “Einstein,” *CW* Vol X 382), apparently met in person with Singer only once (Schefold 187). Singer was an economist at the University of Hamburg, which Keynes knew,

and a “mystic” who had authored two books on Plato, which Keynes also knew and admired, and a long-time member of the George-Kreis (George Circle), which – although it is impossible to prove a negative – there is no evidence that Keynes was aware of. Gay characterizes Stefan George as “poet and seer, leader of a tight, humourless, self-congratulatory coterie of young men, a modern Socrates who held his disciples with a fascination at once erotic and spiritual” (47).

Even as Bloomsbury’s contact with G. E. Moore and, later, Wittgenstein, influenced that group’s rhetorical and substantive work in varying ways, Singer’s involvement with the George-Kreis apparently influenced his contributions to *Wirtschaftsdienst*. Eksteins diagnoses a contemporaneous “metaphysical or romantic faith that Germany represented the essential dynamic of the age, that she was in the vanguard of movement and change in the world of the early twentieth century, and that she was the foremost representative of a Hegelian World Spirit [...]” (80). The fifty-some articles that Singer authored for the *Wirtschaftsdienst*, the economic policy journal that he had founded, and later published in book form, “combine a bleak analysis of the disastrous effects the Treaty of Versailles had on the German economy with almost lyrical expressions of hope for future redemption” (Schefold 189).²¹

Keynes was not only supplying economic policy articles to Singer – Schefold recounts that they frequently corresponded and Keynes “was deeply impressed not just by Singer’s personality, but also by his scholarship, and he requested that Singer translate several of his articles into German” (187) – but by the late 1920s both economists were advertising

²¹ Schefold (189-90) quotes the following passage from Singer: “Nichts anderes kann unsere Welt zwischen Untergang und Aufgang retten, als das Aufspringen einer verborgenen Quelle, in der die Wasser eines neuen Lebens aus unlotbaren Tiefen sich sammeln und zum Strome werden, der die Bilder neuer Erde und neuen Himmels auf seinen Wellen trägt. Bis dahin werden noch viele schwere und nächtige Wege zu gehen sein.” Kurt Singer, *Staat und Wirtschaft seit dem Waffenstillstand*. (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1924), 39.

in an attempt to get each others' respective readerships to subscribe to both periodicals. Keynes wrote a July 25, 1924 letter to Singer (NS/1/1/148-49), noting that he wanted to extend the circulation of the N&A into Germany. "But I am rather perplexed as to the right way to go about it [...] I find it hard to keep up to date with the shifting arrangements for remittance." Keynes wrote that he could pay a commission to "any connection in Germany which was able to bring us the subscriptions" or could use an address list of potential subscribers to send a circular and sample copy of the periodical. He added: "I feel that the 'Nation' would be a really valuable organ to German readers who want to keep in close touch with developments in England, and if we can only find some means of striking [sic] an appropriate public we ought to be able to obtain a circulation of a thousand or so in Germany."

Keynes's request was followed by a reply from Singer, dated August 2, 1924, in German (NS/1/1/153-54) Keynes's N&A files at King's College also include a markup of a N&A subscription solicitation letter, tailoring it to Germany (NS/1/1/228). Keynes sent a subsequent letter to Singer, inquiring about seeking German subscribers for the N&A and asking the cost for an advertising insert in *Wirtschaftsdienst*. (NS/1/1/229).

In 1927, Keynes reinvigorated an international advertising push for the N&A, including in Germany.²² By letter to Singer dated June 9, 1927 (NS/1/1/67-68), covering two single-spaced pages, he re-proposed an advertising plan to increase the N&A's circulation in Germany. The King's College papers include three successive undated one-

²² Keynes's attempts to expand a German readership of the N&A were not limited to the *Wirtschaftsdienst*. For example, NS/1/2/73 is a postcard in German, dated July 11, 1927, from Kurt Vowinkel Verlag GMBH to the N&A. NS/1/2/75 is a letter from Keynes to Kurt Vowinkel Verlag, expressing thanks for a reply to Keynes's proposal for an exchange of advertisements with the N&A, asking for their copy, and stating that the N&A would supply them with inserts for the October issue.

page documents (NS/9/119-121), with identical language but slightly different line spacing, on N&A letterhead, from the Subscription Department, with the following header and text:

THE NATION AND THE ATHENAEUM OF LONDON.

SPECIAL OFFER TO SUBSCRIBERS IN COUNTRIES OF DEPRECIATED EXCHANGE.

The Nation will be sent weekly post free to any address in Germany, Russia, the Succession States of Austria, or the Balkans, at a reduction in charge of 33 per cent from the ordinary price, As follows:

[...]

To give new readers an opportunity of sampling the paper before deciding on a subscription, it will be sent to any address post free weekly for one month (four numbers) for a payment of one shilling. Subscriptions can be remitted in any currency, calculated at the current rate of exchange.

The Nation and The Athenaeum is the leading political and literary weekly newspaper of London. It pays particular attention to foreign affairs. A weekly page on Finance and Investment deals with the broader considerations of the financial position in London. Foreign readers can, by means of it, keep in close touch with British opinions and with the course of events throughout the world. They will also be able to read the literary work of the leading English writers of the day.

A feature of the paper is a fortnightly or monthly article on Economic and Foreign Policy by John Maynard Keynes, who is closely associated with the management.

Wirtschaftsdienst's graphic “question mark” advertisement appeared in the N&A for the first time on May 12, 1928. Even as Keynes and Singer were cooperatively advertising their periodicals, and implicitly the policy recommendations contained in them, across national borders, Keynes was missing significant aspects of the cultural context that might have been relevant for drawing accurate conclusions about the deteriorating prospects for sustaining a functional democracy in Germany.

Ironically, in the May 12, 1928 issue, the *Wirtschaftsdienst* graphic, on page 191, is accompanied by not only two ordinary business advertisements, one for the Abbey Road Building Society and one for The National City Company, but also one that is rather more peculiar. The fourth advertisement, which appears on the upper right quadrant of the page – *Wirtschaftsdienst's* is laid out immediately below it – hawks the publications of Rider & Co.,

publishers of “The Occult Review – 1s. monthly.” Books featured in the Rider ad include *The Brontës & their Stars; An Analysis of Magic & Witchcraft*, and *The History of Atlantis*. The N&A was, admittedly, always in need of advertising revenue to help keep its books balanced. But this juxtaposition of irrationality as claimed titular “history” and “analysis” calls to mind the print culture distinction between literary and bibliographic code.²³ *Wirtschaftsdienst*’s question mark, read in this context, has its promise of reliable answers perhaps visually destabilized just slightly by the company of its eccentric neighbor.

Wirtschaftsdienst’s advertising in the N&A, like Keynes’s translated articles appearing in that journal, would have conferred significant credibility on Singer’s own economic policy writings and, intertwined with them, his conflation of the Versailles aftermath with “cultural renewal” tropes. Keynes read German, if slowly (Moggridge 386) (he typically wrote to his German correspondents in English, and sometimes received their replies in German). Moreover, his parents kept extensive scrapbooks of his coverage in the German press. The *Collected Works* credits as a “main source of information” this material: “a group of scrapbooks kept over a very long period of years by Keynes’s mother, Florence Keynes [...] From 1919 onward these scrapbooks contain almost the whole of Maynard Keynes’s more ephemeral writing, his letters to newspapers and a great deal of material which enables one to see not only what he wrote, *but the reaction of others to his writing*” (emphasis added). With this material at hand, should Keynes have known, or at least guessed and then questioned, more about Singer’s “mystical” rhetoric, and perhaps at least something of Singer’s George-Kreis affiliations? The question seems perhaps unanswerable.²⁴

²³ See Bornstein, *Material Modernism* (6).

²⁴ Moreover, it should be noted that whereas the George Kreis was elitist and had a relatively smaller range of influence, Oswald Spengler’s *Decline of the West*, which emphasized similar tropes about “cultural renewal,” was contemporaneously being widely disseminated in Germany and across national borders.

Finally, both of Bloomsbury's interwar print culture enterprises, the N&A and the Hogarth Press, collaborated in a publication initiative encompassing Germany. Keynes published three short works with the Hogarth Press; the last, and best known of these, was "The End of Laissez-Faire."²⁵ It was published in July 1926, and involved a deliberate and multimodal outreach to a German audience, including a lecture in June 1926 at the University of Berlin.²⁶ The Hogarth Press archives at the University of Reading indicate further that Keynes asked Leonard Woolf to make 200 proofs available on a rush basis for German distribution at the Berlin lecture (Reading MS 2750/211). Keynes explained his plan, in a May 22, 1926 letter to Woolf:

My lecture on "The End of Laissez-Faire" is to be delivered in Berlin on June 23rd, so there is no reason why publication in this country need be delayed beyond the end of next month. I have re-written the lecture for this purpose, and it is now in a state when [sic] I am ready to see it published. I have made arrangements for the German edition with Duncker & Humblot. This had to be done in a hurry because I wanted to have proof sheets of the German version available for my audience. [...]

²⁵ "The Economic Consequences of Mr Churchill" was a July 1925 pamphlet excoriating Britain's recent return to the gold standard. The second, "A Short View of Russia," critiquing Soviet political and economic absolutism, followed a trip to the Soviet Union with Lydia Lopokova in the summer of 1925, and was published later that same year. Highlighting their polemical cast, Keynes reprinted all of his Hogarth Press pamphlets in *Essays in Persuasion* (1931).

²⁶ Willis recounts the pamphlet's publication history, surrounding Keynes's lectures at both Oxford and the University of Berlin:

Keynes had written and delivered it as the Sidney Ball Lecture at Oxford in November 1924. He had offered it to Leonard Woolf as a pamphlet before going off to Russia with Lopokova in August 1925, and Woolf had accepted it (University of Reading, HP 211). Keynes delayed publication, however; he rewrote it and delivered it a second time at the University of Berlin in June 1926 before sending it to the Hogarth Press. With it he sent detailed suggestions for its design and marketing [...] Woolf, not a publisher to take advice gracefully from an author, nevertheless acceded to Keynes's requests (HP 211). Whether it was the additional advertising and page size or the contents, Keynes's booklet sold 3,761 copies in the first six months (MSR).

By handwritten addition, he asked Woolf: “Would it be possible for me to take a couple of hundred proofs of the English version with me to Berlin on June 19,” since it “might help some of the audience.”

The Reading archives indicate further that Leonard Woolf (who was collecting a salary from the N&A at the time) had to be perhaps more forbearing than the typical publisher with respect to “Laissez-Faire.” A June 1, 1926 letter from Woolf to Messrs Neill & Co. Ltd includes printing instructions (which had followed correspondence back and forth between Woolf and Keynes regarding the details of formatting and page size), with the request: “Will you get on with the composition at once? But will you note not to set the title page and headings at the moment, as Mr Keynes may change the title of the book.” A June 14, 1926 letter from Keynes to Woolf notes misprints on the rush project: “An” not “The” appeared in the title. Keynes accordingly asked the Hogarth Press to mark the 200 copies as “Proof” if there was no time to correct the error before Keynes travelled to Germany (Reading MS 2750/211).

Keynes thus engaged, across genres and with a variety of publishing and expert networks, in a continuous series of cross-generic iterations on post-Versailles issues and reparations that was constantly responsive to the historical context (and often trying to shape it). It requires a propagandist to seriously misread this careful and extensive *oeuvre* out of its complexity. And that, of course, happened. Stefan George died in exile in Switzerland in 1933; Gay observes, of the George-Kreis, that “most of the others survived him, some as Nazis, some as the victims of the Nazis, some in sullen silence, some in exile. Sorcerer’s apprentices, they could not exorcise the spirits they had helped call up” (47).

Eley has emphasized that the Nazi party was unprecedented in its unification of factions; it “was a phenomenon without precedent in the history of the Right in Germany”

(Eley 29). As for economic causes, Feldman concludes *The Great Disorder* with a caveat, yet a fairly strong allocation of blame: “one must caution against drawing a direct line from the inflation to the victory of National Socialism. Nevertheless [...] [s]urely, the German inflation is one important reason why so many Germans defaulted not only on democracy but also on civilization itself” (839).

A privileging of rational thought, expressed in political advocacy, was to some extent true of all of Bloomsbury’s artists, as vocal pacifists during World War One and as essayists and public intellectuals writing across genres in response to the growing threat of fascism in the 1930s. But metaphorically, in Weimar, as Gay phrases it, “song was substituted for thought” (69). This rhetorical and cultural trope influenced even an economic policy journal, Singer’s *Wirtschaftsdienst*. “Song” substituted for “thought” might almost be a Jungian shadow image of Virginia Woolf’s late modernist aphorism: “thinking is my fighting.” Precisely because an assumption that rationality should be valued in political discourse was so strongly held a value for Moore’s Edwardian-era Apostles and for Bloomsbury, it came to obscure Keynes’s assessment of rhetorical risks as he engaged in the circulation of ideas through publication networks that deliberately, and as extensively as possible, encompassed the late Weimar Republic.

Moreover, Keynes habitually allowed a great range of editorial freedom in the N&A. A certain amount of unease about rhetorical tone in the *Wirtschaftsdienst*, had he noted it, might not have been off-putting, especially when the promise of shaping public opinion across borders about reparations policy had significant stakes in the balance. During the hyperinflation crisis, Keynes’s German counterparts, Melchior and Cuno, had been businessmen acting as politicians, who desperately sought to solve an economic and fiscal crisis while averting political chaos. Their common frame of assumptions could be taken for

granted. All involved wanted to preserve Weimar democracy and restore economic stability, and this was clearly consonant with Britain's interests too. Singer's amplification of cultural renewal tropes from the George Circle was a different matter; and then the 1929 stock market crash was a perhaps unforeseeably harsh turning point, as financing for Germany's debts became unobtainable, and a "madman" gained an opening – on ground that too easily yielded – to seize power.

Keynes belatedly sounded the alarm in a July 13, 1936 letter to the editor of the *New Statesman & Nation* (the N&A's successor):

Sir,

I find the conclusion of your leading article on "The End of Collective Security" difficult to understand. [...]

I infer that you are opposed to any increase in this country's armaments. [...] I desire those countries, whose fundamental policies are peaceful, to be as formidable as possible. I believe that our own country belongs to this group, and can be trusted, whatever government is in power, not to use its armaments for sinister purposes. The leadership of this group obviously belongs to ourselves, France, Russia and the United States; its membership includes the whole world except Germany, Italy and Japan. We have two tasks before us; first, consciously and avowedly to belong to this group, to give it leadership, body and coherence and to work out means of effective cooperation; and, secondly, to make it collectively so formidable that only a madman will affront it. (NS/1/9/73)

The "madman" was, of course, no longer in the wings; in Germany, and with frighteningly little resistance, he had gained decisive control of the stage. Mass murder, complete abandonment of the rule of law, and bloody global "affront" were by this time already inevitable.

Keynes's attempted interventions with reparations policy, if perhaps helpful in delaying political chaos in Germany in the 1920s, became far less so in the early 1930s. But Leonard Woolf's parallel experiences with the German political and publishing milieu

suggest at least the possibility of a different rhetorical and print culture stance, and a different and earlier, if also surely quixotic, kind of polemical intervention.

IV. “Early Beliefs” Undone: Keynes, Leonard Woolf, and Post-Weimar Germany

Natania Rosenfeld, analyzing German propaganda, underscores how the dictator “appeals to his audience’s cowardice and desire for certainty rather than to their ability to comprehend subtleties” (Rosenfeld, in Pawlowski 162). Keynes’ analysis of German reparations, for all of its polemical tone, routinely foregrounded an iterative development and openness to uncertainty and revision in the context of changing historical circumstances and in response to empirical data – economic, political and cultural. Yet, and perhaps in part because of this iterative complexity, from Keynes’s famous proclamation that “vengeance will not limp” in *Economic Consequences*, to his reconsideration of changed public opinion and consequent softening of that dire warning two years later in *Revision*, to his later journalistic warnings and forecasts over the course of a decade, a general audience might have been especially prone to accept others’ rhetorical misuse of individual snippets of polemic, ripped out of their accompanying historical time and context. The iterative variations of Keynes’s policy writings on reparations, and the factual details and underlying assumptions (including a privileging of rationality, open public debate, and democratic political culture) that comprised the substrate of any given polemical text, might have been easy for a mass Weimar audience to confuse, even if reframed with the best of intentions. This would have become perhaps almost inevitable in the hands of a fascist dictatorship that was reframing it with the opposite intent.

Molly Abel Travis has argued that, for Bloomsbury, “fascism had to be the Other, a threat from the outside to the force of civilization and reason represented by England. They

could not admit of a fascism within” (167). If that was largely true for Moore’s Edwardian-era Cambridge Apostles, at least for Leonard Woolf, and as early as 1933, it elides a growing and perceptive recognition that something dangerous was happening in Germany. J. B. Leishman, a professor at University College, Southampton, contacted Leonard Woolf in the summer of 1933 with a proposal for the Hogarth Press to publish his translations of Rainer Maria Rilke’s poetry (Willis 269). Woolf agreed, “after Leishman had obtained publishing rights from the Insel-Verlag,” Rilke’s German publisher (269). However, the project did not go smoothly. Willis recounts “Leonard Woolf’s reluctance to do business with Nazi Germany” (269). Willis describes the events in a narrative that, as far as I can tell, marks the first overt recognition on the part of a Bloomsburyite that Hitler’s regime necessitated some kind of immediate and public gesture of direct opposition:

As the moment approached for Leonard Woolf to sign the agreement for translation rights with the Insel-Verlag, he felt “great repugnance to do so,” he wrote to Leishman on August 27, 1933. “The more I think about the recent situation in Germany,” he said, “the more barbarous” does the behaviour of the Government seem to me, and I feel that I do not want to have any personal or business relations with those who support or tolerate it.” [n. 11 (HP 387, and in *Letters of Leonard Woolf* 316)] Appealing to Leishman’s generosity, Woolf asked to be released from his contractual obligation. (269-70).

Leishman tried to persuade him otherwise, but, Willis recounts: “Leonard Woolf was not convinced. ‘It seems to me,’ he responded in September 1933, ‘that the only way of showing people in Germany what the view of non-Germans is with regard to the barbarism – which you say yourself is desirable – is by individual action such as the kind I suggested.’” (270) [n.12 (HP 387, and in *Letters of Leonard Woolf* 319)]

But Woolf abandoned this stance. Willis reports: “Woolf found few who supported his view, and so reluctantly he agreed to proceed with the arrangement” (270). Still,

“Leonard Woolf’s attitude [...] was remarkable given the confusion and reluctance of Woolf’s associates in pacifist and socialist circles to take a stand against Hitler. And not many businessmen in England, of whatever stripe, could have had Leonard’s scruples in 1933 about dealing with Germany” (270).

In 1935, Woolf published his uniquely styled anti-fascist polemic, *Quack, Quack!*, with the Hogarth Press.²⁷ Woolf’s central claim, and warning, was that fascism in Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany represented a reversion to primitive barbarism, a kind of magical political psychology, in which intuitive belief was elevated to the status of absolute truth, and mediated through the misuse of language and symbolism. Thus, for example, Rosenfeld observes that Woolf’s title “encompasses both repetition and nonsense,” even as Woolf “uses repetitive nonsense words throughout the book to debunk Hitlerian incantation” (Rosenfeld, in Pawlowski (2001)).

Woolf concluded the main part of his text with a critique of those intellectuals – Henri Bergson among them – who were “civilized” and yet, all the more so because of that, enabled fascism. His language in this passage might as easily have convicted the poets, mystics and academics of the Stefan George circle:

To dig up dead gods and worship them, to sacrifice to them reason and the few shreds of truth and civilization which reason has won for the human race, puts one in the ranks, not of forest saints, but of intellectual quacks. [...] In saying this I do not imply that a thinker like M. Bergson is consciously on the side of barbarism or fascism. M. Bergson is a civilized man; he probably dislikes as much as I do many of the manifestations of the present revolt against reason. [...] If the civilized stand firm for reason, tolerance, scepticism, the savage and his superstitions and his absolute

²⁷ Glendinning summarizes the circumstances surrounding Woolf’s completion of *Quack, Quack!* in February 1935, and the Woolfs’ visit to Germany just prior to its publication in June 1935: “He was at the time in daily heated speculation about what was to come, attending anti-Fascist meetings and joining yet more committees” (315).

truths are powerless. It is only when civilized men begin to yield often unconsciously to the wave of unreason that the end is near. Civilizations are not destroyed by the Herr Kubes or even by the Herr Hitlers; they are destroyed when the M. Bergsons have to be numbered among intellectual quacks. (192-93)

The 1935 Hogarth Press version of *Quack, Quack!* also included, as an appendix, “A Note on Anti-Semitism.” Willis describes the circumstances of this historical moment, two years after Hitler had seized power: “The year 1935 was a time to stand up and be counted, but it was also before the full horror of the holocaust” (238). Woolf’s appendix concluded: “The Jew may indeed feel that perhaps after all, as a civilized man, a man into whose mind the lessons of civilization have been burnt by bitter experience, he is an appropriate victim when unfortunate people in the state of mind of the German Nazis are searching for a scapegoat” (201). Although Willis places Leonard Woolf, in England, as “remote from the grim and escalating realities in Germany” (238), he had drawn this conclusion from first-hand observation in Germany, earlier that summer, despite the risk of travel.

Quack, Quack! was subsequently reissued in 1936, as a “cheap edition” that omitted the appendix and its prescient warning about the dangers of escalating anti-Semitism in Germany. The Hogarth Press archives for *Quack, Quack!* (Reading, MS2750/544) shed light on how this puzzling change happened, even as they illustrate the difficulties – as with Leonard Woolf’s observations about Germany in 1933, when he had temporarily balked at the prospect of working with Insel Verlag – of making such a warning legible, as a call for potential resistance, in England at the time.

By letter to Woolf dated September 14, 1936, Dr. Charles Singer, a medical historian and Anglo-Jewish scholar,²⁸ raised the subject of sponsoring a “cheap edition” of *Quack,*

²⁸ For more detail on Dr. Charles Singer (apparently no relation to Dr. Kurt Singer of Hamburg), see Gavin Schaffer’s “Dilemmas of Jewish Difference: Reflections on Contemporary Research into Jewish Origins and

Quack! He offered, on September 21, the sum of £30 to “guarantee” the edition. But he also presented Woolf with a lengthy list of “suggestions” for revision. He elaborated on these by letter dated September 24, 1936, asking Woolf to soften critical references to English royalty and, almost shockingly with hindsight, added: “I strongly advise the omission of your perfectly admirable appendix on Antisemitism. It is perhaps the best thing in the book and that is saying a good deal. Nevertheless I think for the immediate purpose in view it is better out than in.”

By letter dated September 25, an employee of the Hogarth Press conveyed a refusal to Singer. Woolf sent a separate letter to Singer, on the same date, explaining his reasoning: “My real difficulty is that if I bring out a second edition so soon after the first and omit things like references to our own attitude towards our own monarchy or the appendix on anti-semitism, it looks as if I no longer hold those views – which is not the case. Also my experience is that it is fatal to cut out arguments which people will not like.”

September 29, 1936 brought a letter from Singer in response, claiming that there was “less interest now” in the “Jewish question” – although acknowledging that this could change in a few months. Singer also acknowledged that the appendix was “excellent” and suggested further: “I am sure that I could place it by itself, if you would permit me, in America where it would be very effective.”

Woolf, after this protracted correspondence, finally gave in. By letter dated October 5, 1936, he wrote to Singer:

I am afraid I still, to be honest, do not agree with you: but I am convinced that the more one disagrees with criticisms of one’s own writing, the more likely one is to be wrong. [...] I am therefore prepared to cut out the appendix, and I have

Types from an Anglo-Jewish Historical Perspective” (*Jewish Culture and History*, 12:1&2 (Summer/Autumn 2010) 75-95).

already agreed to making the alterations about the King, so that I think this really meets your important points.

A “cheap edition” of *Quack, Quack!* was accordingly published in December 1936, omitting the “Note on Anti-Semitism.”

Keeping in mind a year-by-year, and sometimes even more finely detailed, chronology is essential when attempting to assess the scope and potential impact of Bloomsbury’s print culture networks and what they might arguably have accomplished, furthered or forestalled in Weimar Germany. The collapse of democracy and the demise of the Weimar Republic might well have been inevitable. Histories of modern Germany invariably underscore that, with notable exceptions, most people failed to recognize the immediacy of the danger; those who did generally hesitated to speak out or resist in other ways, while resistance might still have been possible; and then, rather abruptly, it was too late. Leonard Woolf’s reception, first with his Insel Verlag qualms, and then with the *Quack, Quack!* appendix, demonstrates the nature and extent of the problem.

Under Keynes’s leadership, the N&A was a locus for experimental literary and political “individualism.” Its contributors were not bound by any party doctrine, even that of the Liberal party, and they were deliberately freed as much as possible from heavy-handed editorial intervention. The N&A was simultaneously inside and outside of the Bloomsbury frame, a locus for iterative, rapid response to historical change, its circulation of political, economic and cultural ideas influencing publics beyond Bloomsbury, and influencing Bloomsbury itself in interdisciplinary ways. Inside and outside the pages of Keynes’s periodical, “Anon” often held sway. But, whether playful, pragmatic or innovative in the back of the magazine, “Anon’s” privileges – its “new standard of truth” carrying a vague and unconscious inflection (Forster, “Anonymity” 82), the “emotion” of its “song” (Woolf, “Anon” 382) – could also carry attributes of a rhetorical wild card, set into motion by

Keynes, enjoying the credibility of his and Bloomsbury's *ethos*, but repurposable by contacts and foes in Germany in unforeseen ways.

Who could tell "Anon" that he might – rarely, but because of that, perhaps all the more destructively – be wrong? Keynes's innovative and even "arrogant" approach – to borrow an adjective from MacMillan – as he sought to ameliorate a humanitarian crisis in the wake of Versailles and preserve a shaky peace, worked well for what Forster characterizes as the "muddle" of the early Weimar years. But engaging in it required a problematic kind of certainty that was much less suited for the "wickedness" of the 1930s. The question mark graphic in the *Wirtschaftsdienst* advertisement was emblematic and metonymic of Bloomsbury's own method, prioritizing the free circulation of ideas, a questioning of underlying assumptions, and a commitment to common discourse. But "Anon" lost track of this, even as Kurt Singer's commitments to the George-Kreis and its rhetoric of "cultural renewal" allowed the questions to be neither asked nor answered in a manner that Moore's Apostles or "Old Bloomsbury" would have recognized.

Observing that Keynes's perspective on both Moore and Freud becomes more critical over time, Marina MacKay even characterizes Keynes's observation in his 1938 address to Bloomsbury's Memoir Club, "My Early Beliefs," that the Apostles had believed in a "pseudo-rational view of human nature" (MEB 95) as a "retraction" (MacKay 67). Here, Keynes characterizes the Apostles as "among the last of the Utopians...who believe in a continuing moral progress by virtue of which the human race already consists of reliable, rational, decent people" (MEB 95). He also warned an audience that included not only "Old Bloomsbury" itself but the next generation: "we carried the individualism of our individuals too far." (MEB 96). Yet Keynes still defended "an art derived from the order and pattern of life among communities" (MacKay 68).

Keynes ultimately did not have, or neglected to give sufficient weight to, qualitative information that could have presented a fuller picture of the evolving situation in late Weimar Germany. The aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash and its impact on the German economic and sociopolitical situation called for a different kind of rhetorical intervention by Keynes in the early 1930s, and that did not happen. It seems reasonable to assume that subsequent developments in mid-1930s Germany, above all, did much to unsettle Keynes's "early beliefs," as he began to recognize the course that a "madman" in power was charting. Keynes's German reparations work, sometimes highly public, sometimes anonymous, always carried out with the weight of expert reputation and credibility to amplify not only his voice but those of his associates in Germany, becomes a test case of the iterative "Bloomsbury model" pushed to the breaking point.

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Chapter Five

Leonard Woolf and Ceylon: Modeling Anti-Imperialism

In *Diaries in Ceylon: 1908-1911*, Leonard Woolf records his ethically disquieting activities as a colonial administrator. Two years later, Woolf reframes material from these official diaries as a socioeconomic case study in novel form. In *The Village in the Jungle* (1913), the economic and regulatory structures of British imperialism circumscribe Sinhalese culture in all respects, leading to catastrophe. Section One of this chapter argues for a reading of these two texts as an early attempt, by a key member of “Old Bloomsbury,” at modeling in prose a critique of economic imperialism in the British Commonwealth. Leonard Woolf’s first novel, despite and sometimes because of its formal and aesthetic flaws, can also be read as his first attempt at an anti-imperialist polemic. Fictionalizing his own experiences as a colonialist functionary and narrating much of the novel from a Sinhalese point of view, Woolf depicts British colonialism as an economic model that can no longer be sustained.

Section Two explores the early and continuing difficulties, for both Leonard Woolf and John Maynard Keynes, of “standing outside” the structures of British imperialism in their post-Cambridge civil service work. As these two Cambridge Apostles, in the years before World War One, became core members of “Old Bloomsbury,” their trajectories with respect to colonialist policy and anti-imperialism diverged significantly. For Leonard Woolf and Keynes, situated respectively at the periphery and center of the Edwardian-era British

empire, the costs and consequences of British imperialism in Southeast Asia became only partially legible, and in very different ways.

Section Three offers an analysis of Leonard Woolf's later, cross-generic revisiting of Ceylon, focusing on works published by the Hogarth Press that not only played an essential role in furthering the development of his mature anti-imperialist political theory, but that suggest key commonalities between the print culture concept of version theory and the iterative modeling approach that, I argue, is characteristic of Bloomsbury. Chapter Five concludes that Leonard Woolf's empirical method of inquiry into the subject of British imperialism – from his early Sinhalese texts to his extensive body of Fabian socialist and anti-imperialist political prose and his late reflections upon Ceylon in *Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904 to 1911* (1961) – also reflects an epistemological and rhetorical acknowledgment of uncertainty that, notwithstanding Woolf's tendency toward formal didacticism, he holds in common with other key members of Bloomsbury. Contemporaneously, the postcolonial sociocultural and economic conditions that Leonard Woolf examines across these different genres call into question Bloomsbury's modernist project in various ways, which can be brought into useful conversation with the writings of Keynes, E. M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf.

John Lehmann, in his 1978 memoir of the Hogarth Press, gives early expression to a dilemma that scholars of Leonard Woolf have frequently noted: “[E]ven now I cannot quite fit the different manifestations of his nature into a coherent picture” (67). Lehmann portrays Woolf as, “[i]n disasters and emergencies...the Roman stoic” (67), but deplores “the other side of his nature: an over-developed meticulousness about small details of finance, orderly accounting, and punctuality that seemed quite unworthy of the Cambridge Apostle” (67). However, at least insofar as these traits may detract from Woolf's earlier writings, Lehmann's

“enigma” (67) remains anything but a static picture. In ways that are significant not only stylistically but substantively, I argue that this disjunction lessens over time. In Woolf’s later political prose, especially *Principia Politica*, and in the several volumes of his autobiography, the occasionally disconcerting misfit between Woolf’s prose style and his ethical and political commitments is increasingly ameliorated, even as those commitments turn more strongly against Britain’s colonialist regime. To borrow a critical term that E. M. Forster applied to Leonard Woolf’s early fiction, in the later political and autobiographical prose, he becomes much less a “scold,” and the disjunctions between the style and flow of Woolf’s sentences and the principles that motivate those sentences are – although never fully, still to a greater degree than in his earlier work – reconciled.

Based upon this gradual change, this chapter argues for a new version theory reading of the import and effect of Leonard Woolf’s work and its ethical imperatives in conjunction with the Bloomsbury modeling method. My reading takes issue with those critics, such as Mark Wollaeger and Douglas Kerr, who find Woolf to be complicit with imperialism, and it contributes to a recently expanding line of criticism that tends increasingly to read Leonard Woolf’s *oeuvre* in a more favorable, and more expansive, light.¹

I. *Diaries in Ceylon* and *The Village in the Jungle*: Modeling an “Old Bloomsbury” Critique of Economic Imperialism

The source material for Leonard Woolf’s first novel, *The Village in the Jungle*, is drawn primarily from direct experience during his final Civil Service post in Ceylon, from 1908 to 1911, when he was an Assistant Government Agent in the Sinhalese district of Hambantota.

¹ See, for example, Janice Ho’s recent postcolonial analysis of *Village* in conjunction with Woolf’s evolving perception of his own Jewish identity. Examining *Village* and *The Wise Virgins* (1913), Ho focuses on “the structures of oppression and the structures of resistance of different minority groups” (Ho 736).

Woolf was required to keep official diaries upon assuming this role. The *Diaries*' purpose was to record work done by an Assistant Government Agent, and to describe events and conditions in his district, for review by the Colonial Secretary and sometimes the Governor, so that they would know what was going on in the provinces (*Diaries* viii).²

Woolf lost access to the diaries when he left Ceylon, but they were published after his return visit to now-independent Sri Lanka in 1960, and they became key source material for the second volume of his autobiography, *Growing*. In his 1963 "Preface" to the *Diaries*, Woolf states retrospectively of *Village*:

The book itself and the diaries show how the idea of the book came out of my experiences as the Assistant Government Agent. I do not think that when I left Hambantota the idea of the book was consciously in my mind, but it must have been at the back of my mind, and by the time I had resigned I knew exactly what I wanted to write. (lxxviii)

Woolf actually appears to have begun writing the novel in the fall of 1911, a few months after his return to England, while Virginia Woolf was simultaneously working on *The Voyage Out*. His resignation from the Civil Service became final in May 1912.

The novel takes the socioeconomic costs of colonialism as its central theme. Woolf portrays the fate of a Sinhalese village -- that is, a village in southern Ceylon whose inhabitants are Buddhists -- focusing on a hunter named Silindu and his two daughters. It is written mostly from the point of view of the Sinhalese characters, which was unusual for the time. There are a number of striking parallels between Woolf's prose in the *Diaries* and his descriptions in the novel. As Woolf sets the scene for the little village of Beddagama and the drought-ridden jungle that surrounds it, he describes the jungle in terms that closely

² In 1802, the Civil Service became "the virtual ruler of Ceylon" (*Diaries*, "Introduction" x). It carried out "not only executive functions but also...legislative and judicial functions," without the separation of powers that was an essential element of government in England itself.

resemble observations set forth in his *Diaries*. Thus, in *Village*, he describes the jungle as a place where:

Only the elephants remember the great rivers, which lie far away, and whose banks they left when the rains came; as soon as the south-west wind begins to blow, they make for the rivers again. But the deer and the pig have forgotten the rivers. In the water-holes the water has sunk too low for them to reach it on the slippery rocks; for days and nights they wander round and round the holes, stretching down their heads to the water, which they cannot touch. Many die of thirst and weakness around the water-holes. From time to time one, in his efforts to reach the water, slips, and falls into the muddy pool, and in the evening the leopard finds him an easy prey. The great herds of deer roam away, tortured by thirst, through the parched jungle. They smell the scent of water in the great wind that blows in fresh from the sea. Day after day they wander away from the rivers into the wind, south towards the sea, stopping from time to time to raise their heads and snuff in the scent of water, which draws them on. (6)

In a January 28, 1909 entry from the *Diaries*, he refers to the “great want” of “water in the dry season”:

It is then that the tanks and water holes which lie towards the centre of the Sanctuary in the open spaces which the deer love gives out: the south-west wind is blowing off the sea at that time it is only the elephants who remember where the rivers lie and who make off at once to the water: the other animals, the buffalo and deer, have forgotten the rivers, they smell the water in the wind off the sea and they wander about snuffing the air for days, their heads always turned toward the sea. (46)

On July 7, 1910, he observes the destructiveness of the drought: “There has practically been no rain for over 3 months. The heat is intense: a tremendous south-west wind sweeps clouds of sand and dust over the country: the grass burnt black, all the undergrowths and smaller shrubs brown and withered and many of the larger trees leafless. (166)

A number of critics have noted correspondences in the jungle descriptions from the *Diaries* and *Village*. Indeed, Woolf would revisit these particular jungle motifs again and again

in his work, in contexts varying from offhand review sketch to polemical anti-fascist prose. For example, in a November 7, 1925 book review in the *Nation and the Athenaeum*, he varies his jungle watering hole scene to focus more vividly on elephants (N&A 38:6 at 217). In his mid-1930s anti-fascist book, *Quack, Quack!*, Woolf also draws upon his memories of the jungles in Ceylon, here in a very different political context:

The shock of fear which a man feels when he narrowly escapes being knocked down by an omnibus in a London street is the rational and controlled fear of a civilized man. The writer of this book was once lost by himself for a night in an Asiatic jungle, and he realized that just below the surface of his mind there still lurked a very different fear, which will scatter the herd of deer in blind panic..." (19)

This, Woolf contends (with obviously problematic language) is akin to "the psychology of the savage which persists, half-atrophied and suppressed, under the psychology of the civilized man" (20) – an affective response that, Woolf argues in *Quack, Quack!*, fascist rhetoric in Germany and Italy was playing dangerously upon. Finally, in his autobiography, Woolf returns to Sinhalese jungle tropes, with his original source material from a half-century earlier restored. Glendinning characterizes the literary quality of this return: "In *Growing* there are magnificent passages, mostly transcribed from his official diary, about being lost alone in jungle overnight, about elephants fighting head to head, about a crocodile with a tortoise stuck across its throat, about the uncanny homing instincts of jungle people and animals" (Glendinning 101).

But, uniquely in *Village* as in the *Diaries*, the harshness of the dry season in Hambantota is also a backdrop for economic crisis. The economic elements of *Village* are central, as Woolf's model of British chena policy plays out and the village of Beddagama is obliterated by the tale's end. Chenas were a kind of slash and burn agriculture that were increasingly disfavored by the British colonial service during Leonard Woolf's years in

Ceylon. They were illegal unless a permit was obtained from the government. But they were also a real necessity in jungle areas of southern Ceylon, given conditions of drought. In the *Diaries*, Woolf moves from a general assumption that almost “no one starves” in Ceylon (*Diaries*, November 17, 1909) to a realization that newly strengthened enforcement of British chena policy was becoming increasingly destructive. A series of quotes from the *Diaries* show the progression in Woolf’s thinking, as he was strictly enforcing this policy with villagers but questioning it with his superiors. Ultimately, this became an uncomfortable, and then untenable, position:

July 25, 1909 – The circuit has more than ever convinced me that the question of chenas should be faced. In the northern Walakadas of this division there are these wretched villages scattered through the jungle. The people own paddy land under tanks but in 3 out of 4 years there is no water to cultivate the fields. [...] Unless this valueless jungle is given to the villagers to chena, they have no means of support in their villages. [...] if they do take chenas from Government they have to get the money to pay for them on (one may be certain) ruinous terms.

By February 23, 1910, as a first “serious attempt [was] now being made to stop or restrict” chenas, Woolf tried to warn his superiors: “The problem then arises what are these people to do and what am I to do with them” (136). He records his early observations of the consequences of this policy change on February 25, 1910:

February 25, 1910 – Rode by jungle paths to inspect *re* chenas Mahawela, Vidanegegama, Gamaralagegama and Wadumestirigama. [...] In 1891 the population was 27 belonging to 7 families, in 1901 it was 41 belonging to 9 families. Chenas were stopped in 1908. There are now only 4 families who supported themselves last year by chenaing [...] (137)

By August 14, 1910, his critique was direct: “It cannot be too often insisted upon that chenas have never been seriously curtailed before in this district and that it is a step which, it

is admitted by nearly everyone I think who knows the district, may have the most serious consequences” (178).

In his first novel, Woolf essentially picks up on this last diary observation about the consequences of chena policy. He models a worst-case scenario, a kind of “case study” projecting Beddagama’s destruction, with specifics that truly exemplify a still-dismal science of economics: “The villagers all belonged to the goiya caste, which is the caste of cultivators. If you had asked them what their occupation was, they would have replied ‘the cultivation of rice’; but in reality they only cultivated rice about once in ten years” (7). Except in these rare rainy years, “the village lived entirely by cultivating chenas [...] so sterile is the earth, that a chena, burnt and sown for one year will yield no crop again for ten years” (8). As a consequence of the British chena permit system, “The villagers lived upon debt, and their debts were the main topic of their conversation” (24).

The Sinhalese village headman enforces, and draws his own crumbs of power from, the British regulatory framework: “The villagers owned no jungle themselves; it belonged to the Crown, and no one might fell a tree or clear a chena in it without a permit from the Government. It was through these permits that a headman had his hold upon the villagers.” (26) Accordingly, “the life of the unfortunate man, who had offended the headman, would be full of dangers and difficulties” (27) – and this is Silindu’s fate, which progresses to the entire village’s ruin.

The headman of Beddagama manipulates the legal structures of colonialist regulation – structures that are inherently exploitative, as Woolf’s exposition demonstrates. The exact numerical accounting for permits to cultivate subsistence agriculture on the chena leaves ordinary Sinhalese villagers only the slightest margin for survival. What discretion there is in the headman’s enforcement of British rules affords him considerable power, but not always

for the benefit of his constituency: when he opts to enforce a gun permit fee strictly (29), Silindu faces the prospect of disaster: “Will you let me die of hunger? And my two children”? (31).

Woolf complicates the analysis by showing both imperialist and local exercise of exploitative economic power as potentially destructive, and capable of working in conjunction. The headman tries to disclaim responsibility for the discretion that he clearly exercises by claiming that the British colonial administrator allows none: “the Agent Hamadoru is very strict, and goes round the villages searching for guns for which no permits have been given” (29). Here, British administrative rules based on exactitude and local governance based on a margin for vagueness work together for harm but not for good. The degree of harm is extreme: in the *Diaries*, Woolf predicts “a considerable amount of distress” as the foreseeable outcome of stricter chena policy, and in *Village*, he concludes with the utter destruction of Beddagama, with Punchi Menika, now the village’s sole survivor, on the verge of starvation, and about to be killed by a wild boar. These consequences, the withholding of a material basis for barest survival, are traceable to the economics of British colonialism. In *Village*, Woolf depicts British colonial policy in Ceylon as based upon an economic model that cannot be sustained.

Epistemological modeling is a long-standing tradition of economics. Economists from Adam Smith to John Maynard Keynes to the neoclassical Chicago School, Jonathan Schlefer notes, “make simplified assumptions about the economic world we inhabit and construct imaginary economies -- in other words, models -- based on those assumptions” (25). Models are, in some sense, pragmatically necessary fictions. The economist Tyler Cowen has suggested, conversely, that there are some complementarities between novels and models. But fiction can also convey “thick description,” ambiguity and complexity in ways

that abstract models cannot. As Cowen acknowledges, “A novel, for instance, can offer the stream of conscious reasoning of its characters.” (25) Woolf as novelist thus works to convey affect, to draw empathy from the reader, and also to craft fictional scenarios that allow for some play of intuition around economic and political issues. In particular, he foregrounds a valuing of implicit, even unarticulated, knowledge in key passages of *Village*, particularly in the novel’s trial scenes.

Silindu has two encounters with the court. The first happens when the headman and a moneylender named Fernando, whose advances have been rejected by Silindu’s daughter, Punchi Menika, frame her husband, Babun, and Silindu for theft. The British magistrate tries to discern the facts, marshal the evidence, and give Babun and Silindu a fair trial. When they omit to call defense witnesses, he does. But these efforts are at least partly unavailing – Silindu gets acquitted, but the magistrate mistakenly sends Babun to prison for six months. The language here seems to be reflective of Woolf’s own fact-finding approach in Ceylon as recorded in the *Diaries*:

January 7, 1910 –News of murder at Ranakeliya. Rode out at once about 5 miles in heavy rain and spent the whole morning enquiring. I do not like the case at all as it is apparently very simple and yet I cannot get at the truth. The accused’s story is that he heard what he thought was pig eating his Indian corn at night and fired at the sound. This was midnight of the 5th: On 6th morning at 11 a.m. information is given to the PO by one Babuna that he had found the body of his cultivator lying in the paddy field outside the accused’s house. There are many small points which show that I have not got the truth yet.

I would suggest that what we might call Leonard Woolf’s own early version of “luminous haloes” in *Village* is not so much about portraying character as it is about conveying the magistrate’s inductive process leading to his recognition in the novel that there is “almost certainly something behind this case which has not come out” (162). There

is room here for intuition and vagueness – and under the circumstances it even becomes an essential part of his decision-making process. Relying only upon the surface facts, in a problematic sociopolitical framework, would steer the unnamed, but rather Leonard-like, magistrate wrong in *Village*. As it is, he only gets it partially right. This acknowledgment of uncertainty also foreshadows an approach that Woolf would often bring to his later political writings, an implicit methodology that is empirical, iterative, and sometimes in seeming contrast to the direct and didactic elements of his prose style.³

When Babun is sent to prison, his absence leaves Silindu’s daughter defenseless against Fernando. Silindu finally takes revenge. He kills the headman and Fernando, and then turns himself in to the magistrate, who expresses an opinion to his assistant that this is “not a simple case” (190). Because the charge is for homicide, the case goes to a higher court. In the final trial scene that follows, the clash of sociocultural as well as political and legal misunderstandings is foregrounded. The aporia between colonial magistrate and the prisoner Silindu cannot be bridged. Despite the court’s efforts to explain the process and ensure Silindu a “fair” trial, Sinhalese and English cultures constitute a binary that cannot make sense of each other in a courtroom when outside it, one culture and its economy is exploited by the other. As Woolf’s narrator describes the scene: “Silindu understood nothing of what

³ *Village* itself is much more Edwardian than modernist in narrative form, and sometimes quite “didactic” in the sense of presenting realistic material, often including economic facts, in a direct style that makes these particular passages resemble nonfictional polemic. Moreover, most of Woolf’s characters, with the exception of the magistrate and, to some extent, Silindu, are “types,” quite far removed from what E. M. Forster would describe as fully developed “round” characters. This stylistic tendency often persists in Leonard Woolf’s later work. As Elizabeth Dickens characterizes it, assessing his journalistic writings, in contrast to Virginia Woolf’s tendency to use a style that “address[es] the merits of multiple perspectives on a single topic” (Dickens 43), Leonard “typically aimed in his critical writing to be conventionally persuasive; he outlined his argument clearly and precisely” (43), but – and this is a key point – he “was opposed to absolutism” (44). Moreover, as I explore in more detail in Section III, this didacticism lessens significantly in Leonard Woolf’s final writings, especially his autobiography.

was going on; he did not know, and could not have been made to understand the law; he understood the point and reason for no single question asked him” (213).

Silindu is convicted; a jury, not of his peers, includes “several white Mahatmayas” (212). He does escape hanging, learning four days before his scheduled execution that his sentence “had been commuted to one of twenty years’ rigorous imprisonment” (216). This is at first incomprehensible to Silindu – “He could understand a week or two weeks, or a month, or even six months, but twenty years meant nothing to him” (216) – and then it reflects Woolf’s bitter irony about the colonialist project. Silindu, a Buddhist, had thus far enjoyed, in comparison to the starvation conditions of Beddagama, “the good prison food” (211) and “had been very peaceful and happy” (217) in his ample time for meditation. Now he must shift from his first, Sinhalese interpretation – “He would be left in peace here for twenty years – for a lifetime – to acquire merit, and at the end he might make his way back to the village” (217) – to a British one: “A wooden mallet was put into his hand and a pile of cocoanut husk thrown down in front of him. For the remainder of that day, and daily for the remainder of twenty years, he had to make coir by beating cocoanut husks with the wooden mallet” (217). As Silindu begins this forced labor, the narrator shifts back to Beddagama, recounting, as the novel closes, the impending death of Punchi Menika, the village’s last survivor (237):

The village was forgotten, it disappeared into the jungle from which it had sprung, and with it she was cut off, forgotten [...] Punchi Menika was a very old woman before she was forty. She no longer sowed grain, she lived only on the roots and leaves that she gathered. The perpetual hunger wasted her slowly, and when the rains came she lay shivering with fever in the hut. At last the time came when her strength failed her; she lay in the hut unable to drag herself out to search for food. (235-36).

Ultimately, there are multiple contributing causes for the obliteration of Beddagama. But the impact of British imperialism – the covert violence of its economic framework and, entwined with this, the more overt violence of a legal system that enforces and supports it -- is clearly primary. British chena policy -- economic policy – is the “but for” cause of the village’s destruction. In *Village*, Woolf is illustrating that the colonialist project in Ceylon is unsustainable: there is no meeting of the minds between British and Sinhalese, and colonialist imposition of chena limitations is significantly making conditions worse.

There has been some critical dispute about whether *Village* is an anti-imperialist text or an imperialist text. Yasmine Gooneratne has concluded that it is both. Mark Wollaeger has found the novel imperialistic and misogynistic in the extreme (108). Both Wollaeger and Douglas Kerr believe that *Village* represents Leonard’s wish-fulfillment fantasy of colonial omniscience, since he portrays the Sinhalese’s lives “*when there was no colonial presence to observe them*” (Wollaeger 109-110; Kerr 272). I think that in *Village*, the economic and regulatory structures of British imperialism circumscribe Sinhalese culture in all respects, because of the material deprivations that propel almost every interaction among the villagers, even when no British administrator is physically on the scene. Woolf’s critique is fairly overt in these passages; he seems less to be enjoying a wish-fulfillment exercise in imperialist omniscience than deploying it to analyze British methods of (mis)governing.

From that perspective, we can situate the novel as, in some respects, Leonard Woolf’s first, and flawed, attempt at an anti-imperialist polemic. The narrator’s demonstration in *Village* that colonialist exploitation is not sustainable suggests that Woolf was, even before World War One, reaching toward an ethical recognition that social injustice must be rectified with the end of Britain’s imperialist presence in Ceylon. In 1961, he would look back, admitting in *Growing* that: “I had entered Ceylon as an imperialist” (25). He says:

“What is perhaps interesting in my experience during the next six years is that I saw from the inside British imperialism at its apogee, and that I gradually became fully aware of its nature and problems.” (25).

The process of writing the novel seems to have contributed to this as well. In the next volume of his autobiography, *Beginning Again*, he states:

The jungle and the people who lived in the Sinhalese jungle villages almost obsessed me in Ceylon. They continued to obsess me in London, in Putney or Bloomsbury, and in Cambridge. *The Village in the Jungle* was a novel in which I tried somehow or other vicariously to live their lives. It was also, in some curious way, the symbol of the anti-imperialism which had been growing upon me more and more in my last years in Ceylon...The more I wrote *The Village in the Jungle*, the more distasteful became the prospect of success in Colombo. (47-48).

This phrase -- “growing upon me more and more” -- is perhaps the best descriptor of Woolf’s process of shifting toward anti-imperialism. At the conclusion of Woolf’s novel, not only is the village destroyed, but the supposedly omniscient narrator who had opened the tale -- “I knew such a man once...” (1) -- fails to reappear. Nothing human is left on the scene as Punchi Menika’s life slips away, only the snuffing menace and unthinking appetite of a wild boar (237). This late structural aporia is unsettling, not only in conjunction with the nightmarish closing imagery, but perhaps also because it appears to mark Woolf’s shrinking from fully acknowledging his own culpability in any contemporaneously similar, real-world outcome, even as the denouement of *Village* -- the literal end of Beddagama -- is fictionalized more than fictional, adapted as it is from Woolf’s observations and predictions about the outcome of British *chena* restrictions in the *Diaries*. With time, this would change. One useful way to frame the question might be not so much to ask exactly when or whether Leonard Woolf became an anti-imperialist, but to consider *how* he kept moving toward such a stance and refining its particulars.

II. Limiting Perceptions: Leonard Woolf, Keynes, and British Colonial Structures

Keynes's work in the India Office both paralleled and significantly differed from Leonard Woolf's direct experience with colonial administration in Ceylon. In the aftermath of his return to England, Woolf would develop further his anti-imperialist political stance, even as he became a proponent of Fabian socialism. On the one hand, *Village*, for all of its early anti-imperialist critique, evinces occasional gaps or aporias that demonstrate the difficulty of "standing outside" the structures of British imperialism. On the other hand, Keynes's biographer, Robert Skidelsky, has asserted: "Maynard always saw the Raj from Whitehall: he never considered the human and moral implications of imperial rule" (Vol. I, 176). Even as it would be overstated to characterize *Village* as a maturely and completely anti-imperialist text, Skidelsky's critique of Keynes, while accurate for the most part, also omits significant nuance.

Paradoxically, the rhetoric and scope of a very colonialist "Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India Report," published annually, highlights the potential for a different and more reflective kind of recognition on Keynes's part regarding imperialist structures. Keynes edited this report one year, and then reviewed the next iteration of it anonymously, after leaving the India Office and giving suggestions for the report's improvement, the following year. Conversely, in *Village*, as Woolf depicts the proximate cause of Silindu's troubles with the headman, he raises and then immediately elides a disparity in British colonial justice, a legal element of imperialism that he omits to interrogate in either the *Diaries* or in the novel.

Keynes joined the India Office in October 1906 (Moggridge 109).⁴ In March 1907 he was transferred to the Revenue, Statistics and Commerce Department where “his work became much more interesting” (Moggridge 168). Here, he was immersed in policy material and obtained a rather comprehensive, albeit bird’s eye, view of the office’s scope. He wrote to Lytton Strachey: “everything comes to me to read, and I read it [...] Some of it is quite absorbing – Foreign Office commercial negotiations with Germany, quarrels over Russia in the Persian Gulf, the regulation of opium in Central India, the Chinese opium proposals – I have had great files to read on all these in the last two days.” (KCKP, JMK to GLS, 7 March 1907). This bird’s eye view would have been good preparation for an India Office career civil servant, and it continued when Keynes was asked to take up editing the Moral and Material Progress Report. (KCKP IA/3/1-102)

The Moral and Material Progress Report was, as Pramod K. Nayar categorizes it from a postcolonial perspective in *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*, propagandistically embedded within the “language and register of a colonial discourse of improvement” (162). It was an essential part of the machinery of empire, for otherwise “the colonial set-up would not have the adequate rhetoric or ideational bases for its acts” (162). As Nayar describes the India Office report: “An entire periodical, Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India, was launched in 1859-60 to spread the views [...] of the great colonial mission of civilizing the natives” (162).

The Moral and Material Progress Report fell into a genre with highly problematic goals and rhetoric, consonant with the India Office’s aim of furthering this particular, self-serving “branding” of the imperialist project. Whereas Leonard Woolf’s *Diaries in Ceylon* occasionally allowed for a critical individual stance on particular policy initiatives, such as

⁴ For a further description of Keynes’s work in the India Office, see Anand Chandavarkar’s *Keynes and India* 10-19.

chena restrictions – that limited scope for dissent was permitted, if risky, because it might have facilitated more competent administration at the district level in Hambantota – as a junior civil servant, Keynes would have had little scope for either substantive or stylistic innovation with the Moral and Material Progress Report, even if he had been inclined to attempt it. It is all the more surprising, then, that a year later, having left the India Office for Cambridge, he did, to some extent, try.

When he was first assigned the 1906-07 version (the “Forty-Third Number,” to be published in in May 1908), Keynes wrote irreverently⁵ to Strachey that the volume would have “an illustrated appendix on Sodomy ... this is the last you will hear of it: for the Appendix is to be marked secret and kept in the Office.” (KCKP, JMK to GLS, 1 March 1907). The actual scope of the Moral and Material Progress Report, which was prepared from a large number of annual reports (not always reliable) that the Office received from India, included coverage of, among other areas, the predictable imperialistic preoccupations – “Justice and Police,” “Finance,” “Land Revenue,” and “Taxation and Opium Reserve” – but also a chapter on “Literature and the Press.”

The Forty-Third Number was heavy on statistics and other quantitative data, and featured little qualitative analysis. As an example of its characteristic language, from the chapter on “Post Office and Telegraphs”: “During the year under review 74,394 value-payable articles were despatched [sic] from India to Ceylon, as compared with 54,242 articles in the preceding year” (MMP 145). Statistical recitation in the passive voice, appropriate here, becomes jarringly disconcerting in other contexts, among them the Moral and Material

⁵ Keynes, who was simultaneously working on his probability dissertation (Moggridge 173), soon became disenchanted with his transfer in the India Office; he wrote to Strachey in September 1907 that he was “bored nine-tenths of the time and rather unreasonably irritated the other tenth whenever I can’t have my own way” (KCKP, JMK to GLS, 13 Sept 1907).

Progress Report's coverage of literature, and even more so, its reporting on health and disease.

The "Literature" section opens with a statistical table of Indian publications, sorted by province and language. The narrative detail that follows is similarly "objective" and, overall, mostly dismissive. For example:

The above table gives concisely the number of publications registered throughout India in European, Eastern, classical and the principal Indian Vernacular languages. The number of bilingual and polyglot works, however, makes classification difficult. [...]

Of the total number of publications (1,440) registered in Madras for the year 1,906, 496 were periodicals. Of the 460 returned as of a religious nature, none can be said to have risen above the ordinary doctrinal or polemic level. Considered as a whole, the year's publications showed an increased literary activity, which was, however, somewhat restricted in its nature. The number of books which indicate real intellectual progress, originality of conception, or power of healthy assimilation evidenced by the native mind, is exceedingly small. (IA/3/82-83, MMP 160-61)

Turning next to the literary output of Bombay, the Report is similarly dismissive (IA/3/83-84, MMP 161-62). But, for the then-recently partitioned province of Bengal, where Rabindranath Tagore, only a half-decade away from winning the Nobel Prize in Literature, was immersed in the task of modernizing Bengali literature and art, the tone changes surprisingly – and shows it *has* the capacity to change:

There was in Bengal in 1906 a remarkable fertility in almost all the domains of literature. Political, social, and industrial questions attracted the best talent of the province, and in the treatment of these subjects a greater and more sustained intellectual vigour was displayed, showing itself principally in the expression of a desire for increased political power and industrial improvement, but also in the higher and quieter walks of literature. (MMP 161)

Of Tagore, in particular, the Report acknowledges: "An important contribution to Bengali fiction was made by Babu Rabindra Nath Tagore in his novel *Naukadanbi*, which is

distinguished for its general culture and for the masterly way in which delicate problems of every-day life are handled” (MMP 162).

British colonialist rhetoric applied to Indian literature of 1906-07 is off-putting to an uncomfortable degree. But this is aggravated even further when statistical analysis and “objective” interpretation in the passive voice are applied to the topic of health and welfare. Bubonic plague was a significant scourge in India at this time. The Moral and Material Progress Report states, first, that 1906 was a year of “remarkable decline” – deaths caused by plague were “356,721, the smallest total since 1901” (MMP 18). Then the objective bureaucratic voice, having foregrounded the better news, acknowledges that 1907 was much worse, with “1,200,733” fatalities (MMP 18). This sequencing does not soften the impact of the latter number; to a contemporary reader, it seems more likely to accomplish the reverse.

If he had mocked the Moral and Material Progress Report in his March 1, 1907 letter to Strachey, Keynes critiqued the bureaucratic annual more seriously a year later, in print, although anonymously.⁶ Asked to provide suggestions for the Report’s improvement as he left the India Office for Cambridge, he reviewed the subsequent volume in the July 3, 1909 issue of *The Economist*. (IC/3/5; CW, Vol XV: *Activities 1906-1914*, 34-38). Keynes acknowledges in this review that the 1907-08 report had been changed and improved from the prior year’s, but he finds it “still marked by the rigid economy of statement upon many interesting and controversial subjects, which is somewhat characteristic of the India Office” (CW, Vol XV 34). On the one hand: “A new chapter on the condition of the people is, perhaps, the most interesting in the volume” (CW, Vol XV 35). On the other:

⁶ The editors of Keynes’s *Collected Works* note “The editing of the report on the Moral and Material Progress of India had given Keynes some ideas for its improvement, and his successor in the task at the India Office...consulted him on its organisation. When the report was published Keynes wrote *The Economist* review of it: the review is unsigned but his notebook lists it as earning three guineas.” (CW, Vol XV 33).

A Government is not bound to supply unfriendly critics with fuel. But if the officials prefer to maintain silence touching the difficulties they have to encounter and the imperfections which exist in spite of their efforts, they must not be surprised that the public sometimes derive their information from less trustworthy sources, or complain of British ignorance respecting the peculiar difficulties of Indian administration. The period covered by the report was one of the most trying in the recent history of the country. Plague, famine, and political unrest quickly followed one another. (CW, Vol XV 34).

In his review of this later Moral and Material Progress Report, Keynes, noting the benefit of a reduction in the salt tariff to the Indian consumer, also recommended abolishing the salt tariff system altogether (CW, Vol XV 37). He published this suggestion – “Let us hope it may soon be abolished” (CW, Vol XV 37) – even as Leonard Woolf was enforcing a slightly different salt revenue system in Ceylon with a strictness that he would later condemn (*Growing* 181, 223).⁷

Woolf’s critique of colonialist structures also evinces certain gaps in *Village*. Yasmine Gooneratne has compared Leonard Woolf’s original manuscript for *Village*, donated by Trekkie Parsons in 1974 to be archived in the University of Peradeniya Library in Sri Lanka (Gooneratne 2), with the 1913 version published by Edward Arnold. In the novel’s first chapter, the variations between original and published version revolve to some extent around Silindu’s act of homicide. Silindu beats his wife, Dingihami, because she bears him twin daughters; two days later, she dies (*Village* 11-12). As Gooneratne reports: “The manuscript yields evidence that substantial cuts were made in the text of the novel before publication, presumably at proof stages since many passages uncut in the manuscript have been omitted from the published text” (20). Gooneratne notes that these cuts “occur with especial frequency in the areas of village sexuality and the earthiness of village speech. [...]”

⁷ By 1930, nonviolent civil disobedience of the Indian salt laws would, of course, become a powerful rallying point for Mahatma Gandhi’s satyagraha movement.

Silindu's angry words to the wife who has borne him twin daughters are also cut: The manuscript's 'curse you and curse your womb' is printed in the text as the much milder 'Curse you!' (20). She explains further: "The Sinhala language is frequently used to mask verbal abuse among the villagers: 'whore' in the manuscript is exchanged in the printed version for the Sinhala 'vesi' (pp. 11, 33, 83)" (Gooneratne 20)

Gooneratne includes the original passage, depicting Silindu's violence toward the mother of his children, from the first chapter of the manuscript version:

At length Dingihami bore twins, two girls, one of whom was called Punchi Menika and the other Hinnihami. When the women told Silindu that his wife was delivered of two girls, he rushed into the hut and began to beat his wife on the [p. 47] head and breasts as she lay on the mat, crying [n. 33] [Vesi! Vesi mau!] 'Where is the son who is to carry my gun into the jungle, and who will clear the chena for me? Do you bear me vesi for me to feed and clothe and provide dowries? Curse you [n. 34] []!' And this was the beginning of Silindu's quarrel with Babehami, the headman, for Babehami, hearing the cries of Dingihami and the other women, rushed up from the adjoining compound and dragged Silindu from the house.

Dingihami died two days after giving birth to the twins. Silindu had a sister called Karlinahami, who lived in a house at the other end of the village [...] (Gooneratne 46)

The text shifts focus here, to describe how Karlinahami then joins with Silindu to raise the children. In the Peradeniya manuscript, as in the published novel, while the headman's anger is recorded, British justice is nowhere on the scene. The headman will come to enact this anger against Silindu throughout the novel, but he never calls his motivating reason Dingihami's "murder." Causation may be deliberately blurred, with the circumstances of the delivery (which are not described) and Silindu's "curse" words – the village medicine man, PUNCHIRALA, is later shown to be efficacious in wielding "curses," but the reader is given no reason to suppose that Silindu is – piled upon his physical assault. Nevertheless, the headman seems to blame Silindu's acts as the proximate cause of her death. Yet the

possibility of the headman's resorting to the colonial criminal justice system on Dingihami's behalf – in a context where villagers sometimes attempt to petition the Assistant Government Agent on questions of chena allocations and gun permits, and where, later in the novel, both Silindu and his son-in-law Babun will be tried for burglary, and Silindu for the headman's and Fernando's murders – is entirely absent.

Gooneratne does not note any additional changes to this passage between the manuscript and published text. Thus, a seemingly incongruous aspect of this foundationally motivating scene, from the perspective of British criminal law as it would have applied in England as distinct from Ceylon, goes unaddressed by Woolf in either the original manuscript or the published version of *Village*. Granted, it would have generated a major plot problem if Silindu had been removed, at the outset of the novel, from the village of Beddagama. Yet this aporia also evinces commonalities with Woolf's own experience in the administration of British colonial "justice," as he encountered and had some administrative responsibility for an analogous case, which he wrote about in both the *Diaries* and his letters to Strachey.

On November 25, 1908, Woolf wrote to Strachey about a Sinhalese woman who had been killed by her common law husband for failing to prepare "paddy" grain for his dinner (Spotts 141-42).⁸ Woolf first reiterates the absence of any separation of powers in the Ceylon Civil Service: "As I suppose you know I am everything here: policeman, magistrate, judge, & publican" (141). He provides details of what he had been called to witness – news that "a murder had been committed at a place with the wonderful name Tissamaharama" (142) As

⁸ Fredric Spotts notes, of Woolf's letters from Ceylon: "By far the greatest number were written to Strachey, and they are the frankest and therefore the most interesting. Official correspondence by or about Woolf as an agent of the Ceylon government was destroyed in accordance with administrative practice, though his letter of resignation and related Colonial Office documents – which belong to a later period – are preserved in the Public Record Office" (Spotts 62).

Woolf explains: “[t]he orders of Government are that when murder is reported you go straight to the spot & look at the body & catch the murderer & take down the interminable evidence. [...] A man had kicked the woman with whom he lived to death because she had not got his dinner ready” (142).

Woolf also records the same event in his *Diaries*, but in three separate entries, which reflect an evolving recognition that this homicide, committed under similar domestic circumstances as that of the fictionalized killing of Dingihami in *Village*, was not in fact prosecutable under British colonial law in India and Ceylon. On November 23, 1908, he writes: “At 8:30 a.m. received information of a murder at Tissa. Started to drive there at 10 o’clock. [...] Reached Tissa at 3 and held inquiry until 8 p.m.” (*Diaries* 30). After five hours’ inquiry, Woolf (the son of a barrister, who had practiced under English common law, not a colonial variation) recorded his findings: “A quarrel between a man and the woman kept by him because she did not pound the paddy. He thrashed her one night and the next morning started again and apparently killed her by kicking her on the spleen. His statement amounts to a confession and the evidence is conclusive. It is merely the legal question as to whether it is murder” (30).

In England itself, there would have been no “legal question” left to determine, following such a confession. But on November 25, Woolf recorded: “Took evidence of two more witnesses in the murder case. It is now complete except for the doctor’s evidence” (30). In Ceylon, this kind of medical “evidence” was crucial, and Woolf records the details, on November 26, with a slightly unusual turn of phrase: “Finished the murder case by taking the doctor’s evidence which shows that the man will never be convicted of murder” (*Diaries* 30-31). The doctor’s finding was: “The woman was suffering from so diseased a spleen that a very light blow would have caused death. The doctor was of [sic] opinion that it was a

slight blow which ruptured the spleen and caused death” (31). Two repetitions of the word “murder” juxtaposed with “never...convicted,” as Woolf phrases it in the November 26 *Diary* entry, does not carry quite the same exculpatory tone as “not guilty” might have. Moreover, the doctor’s finding of a “slight blow” rests in some tension with Woolf’s earlier recording of evidence that the woman, after being “thrashed,” was subsequently the victim of a “kicking” in the spleen.

Under the “eggshell plaintiff” rule, a basic tenet of Anglo-American criminal law, an assault that causes death is prosecutable as a murder, even if healthier victims subjected to the same injury would have lived. It is no defense that the victim has a pre-existing vulnerability that could not have been anticipated by the assailant. But a controversial exception to this common law rule applied in colonial India and Ceylon. Elizabeth Kolsky, in *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (2010), investigates the so-called “diseased spleen” defense (136), which “assert[ed] that a man could not be held liable for the death of another whose body, unbeknownst to him, was in an internally (and therefore hidden) state of disease and decay”(136-37). Typically, Kolsky finds, this defense was used to exonerate white Britons who killed Indians: “In trials of Britons who killed Indians by striking them with sticks, bricks, whips, and kicks, medical evidence was often presented by colonial doctors to support the claim that Indians had weak insides and were therefore more susceptible to such blows” (136).

Kolsky cites Viceroy Curzon’s sardonic description of the “diseased spleen” defense as it had developed in India, shortly before Leonard Woolf encountered it in Ceylon:

Commenting on a case where a British official was fined 100 rupees for kicking a coolie who later died, Viceroy Curzon sarcastically remarked, ‘Of course he had a big liver or a big spleen; and equally of course the kick was represented as a ‘push with the foot’ – the phrase is now an Indian classic”

(Kolsky 137, citing a letter from Curzon to Hamilton, dated November 5, 1902).

By the Edwardian era, this “defense” had become a significant public relations problem for Britain, with the Indian press increasingly protesting acquittals based on it (Kolsky 139). Kolsky quotes a private letter from the Secretary of State to Lord Curzon, following a 1903 acquittal and resulting protests by the public and in the press: “We cannot ultimately hold the country with the assent of the better class of Natives if these miscarriages of justice are to be associated with our rule. Popular we can never be, but if we lose our reputation for justice, the foundation of our prestige is gone” (Kolsky 139, quoting BL, IOR, Mss Eur/F111/162).

Natania Rosenfeld notes the “disturbing” (38) nature of Woolf’s experience in Tissamaharama, as recorded in the November 25, 1908 letter to Strachey. She finds that Woolf’s letters evince “an odd mix of naturalistic description and almost flippant, curiously detached commentary” (38), a sort of affect that was self-protective, even as Woolf was early in the process of shifting from “initial ambivalence” to “gradually...an anti-imperialist conviction” (39). At least in the handful of years surrounding his direct responsibility for enforcing British law in Hambantota, this particular aporia seems to suggest the difficulty, for Woolf, of standing rhetorically and critically outside of an imperialist context that, as the November 25 letter shows, proved affectively powerful to a degree that may have prompted a denial and “detachment” from further interrogating in print his own culpability in colonialist misrule.

Conversely, Keynes intermittently used India as a subject for economic and fiscal policy work after leaving the Civil Service. He wrote, lectured and served on Treasury committees concerning Indian finance and currency through the mid-1920s. As late as 1926,

he gave evidence to the second Royal Commission on Indian Currency (CW, Vol XVIII).⁹ It was rare that affect appeared to play any role in the consideration that he gave to Indian policy matters, but in a controversy that surfaced in 1909 over the treatment of Indian students at Cambridge, there is a notable exception.

The Cambridge Review printed a highly prejudiced article, “The Indian Student at Cambridge,” on May 13, 1909 (385). It excoriated the character of current Indian students and warned of negative political impacts to the British Raj upon their return to India. Keynes’s reply, dated May 17, 1909 in typescript and published, as a Letter to the Editor, in the May 20, 1909 issue of *The Cambridge Review*, took strong exception to an “article so lacking in discernment and good feeling” (King’s IC/1/4-5; CW Vol XV 30-33). He attempted to intervene in the debate: “When one reads such expressions of opinion, it is easy to understand why we have an ‘Indian problem’ in Cambridge, and why, in the past, we have sometimes sent young Indians back to India embittered against us. [...] it is he [the author of the May 13 article] and people like him who create the problem as it exists here.” (IC/1/5) The words “why” and “create” are underlined in the typescript copy, and they are italicized in the published version (CW Vol XV 31) to convey emphasis.

That was, however, a rare exception. The N&A and its successor, *The New Statesman*, published dozens of articles on Indian politics and economics, from a range of authors, both named and anonymous, and from a variety of perspectives, usually but not always critical of empire. None of these articles about India appear to have been authored by Keynes, nor does he appear to have commented on any of them in print. But in correspondence to

⁹ Chandavarkar even suggests: “it could be said that India and Indian affairs ranked second only to Britain in Keynes’s intellectual preoccupations, and in some respects even outranked it, as for instance, his contributions to the theory and practice of the gold exchange standard and the formulation of the developmental role of a central bank” (2). I think this is only partially correct in historical context: Keynes’s emphasis on India was significant until the 1920s, but after World War One, his concern with German reparations and the inter-Allied debts considerably outweighed his interest in Indian matters.

Kingsley Martin of *The New Statesman* in 1943, provoked by irritation at a series of factually sloppy pieces that had been written by H.N. Brailsford, Keynes implicitly acknowledged that closer proximity to that nation, soon to become independent, might have had the potential to alter his views on Indian policy and the British Raj.

Keynes wrote to Martin on January 28, 1943: “You mention his famine article. Of course, that was about as silly and ill-informed as it could be, but I was not emphasising that particularly” (NS/1/5/95). On February 9, 1943, he sent a letter headed “Private & Personal” to Martin, complaining of Brailsford’s “fantastic misrepresentations of fact” about the causes of the Indian famine (NS/1/5/199). Commenting on “muddled” governance during a time of transition, and that Brailsford had “overlooked the fact that the greater number of the Viceroy’s Council are Indians” (NS/1/5/199), Keynes continued:

The conclusion Brailsford ought to have drawn is that, since the Indianisation of the Viceroy’s Council, the once prized efficiency of the I.C.S. and the Government, at any rate on the administrative side, has largely disappeared, which is a sad forecast of what will happen when we have entirely withdrawn our hands. Personally, I am so fed up with India, that I should like to clear out on any terms and at the earliest possible moment. *But probably, if I was nearer the facts, I should not have the heart to follow my inclinations literally [...]* (NS/1/5/199-200) (emphasis added).

This is disturbing for the implication that Keynes might, with such a change of “heart” prompted by being “nearer the facts,” have argued for a further delay in England’s departure from India. But Keynes also seems to recognize in his 1943 correspondence that a more direct kind of experience, perhaps including “facts” of the kind that Leonard Woolf’s years in Ceylon had forced upon his awareness at the level of personal engagement, might have made a difference – with what political impact, whether of the kind that he assumes in the letter to Martin, or the opposite, must remain speculative.

Leonard Woolf, in the years immediately after his return to England, became a committed and active anti-imperialist and Fabian socialist. In 1915, he published an article criticizing the British governor's decision to impose martial law in Ceylon.¹⁰ He followed up with further condemnation of the policy and its consequences in early 1916.¹¹ For Keynes, a counterfactual extrapolation backwards from the 1943 letters also seems possible. His 1909 review in *The Economist*, as he criticizes both the bureaucratic rhetoric of the Moral and Material Progress Report and the continuance of the salt tariff policy, like Woolf in these later two articles but to a much a milder extent, *does* critique in print the policies of the British colonial government. It is something of a "standing aside." Yet these critiques do not condemn imperialism *per se*, unlike Leonard Woolf's writings, and their critical rhetoric is nothing like the polemics that Keynes would publish in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles. Keynes's correspondence with Martin in 1943 is at least faintly suggestive of an opportunity lost, even as it also suggests that Keynes was able, with momentary attention to the question, to recognize his own positioning at the center of empire, and to further recognize that something was lacking in that view.

III. Versions of Anti-Imperialism: Leonard Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and Ceylon

The acknowledgment of uncertainty and complexity that is essential in *Village* foreshadows an epistemological approach that Leonard Woolf would bring to his later political writings, an implicit methodology that is sometimes in contrast to the direct and didactic elements of his prose style. After his novel about the economic consequences of colonialism, Woolf turned to nonfictional forms of the Bloomsbury polemic to continue to

¹⁰ "Martial Law in Ceylon," *The New Statesman* (2 October 1915).

¹¹ "The Riots in Ceylon," *The New Statesman* (11 March 1916). [add more on LW and Fabianism?]

explore these questions. Here, too, an iterative modeling method becomes key. In his 1920 polemic, *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, he posits, now with a commitment to Fabian socialism, that imperialism is motivated purely by economic factors. By 1928, in *Imperialism and Civilization*, he particularizes the analysis by region, treating India and Ceylon as a special case, and, ultimately, although he continues to emphasize economic motives, he acknowledges that there is no single cause of the “complex” phenomenon of imperialism. As Willis observes: “Although he had focused relentlessly on the economic causes of imperialism in his first two books, Woolf now admitted cultural, religious, and racial motives to imperialistic exploitation” (226).

In *Imperialism and Civilization*, Woolf distinguishes Southeast Asia as a special case, expanding the scope of his analysis both historically and geographically. Focusing on Ceylon as a historical example, he extrapolates from his own empirical experience: “I have chosen this case of Ceylon because I happen to have observed it myself. But the story... can be matched in many other parts of the British Empire” (43). Woolf urges that “it is necessary to consider India (and with India Ceylon) separately” (51), because of their unusually long history of contact with, and at least partial domination by, “Europeans” (51) before Britain’s hold was there “steadily extended during the first half of the nineteenth century” (54).

Woolf characterizes the origins of the British Raj, as well as a fundamental weakness inherent in its system: “The Government of India was an alien European government, administered by Englishmen, superimposed upon an Eastern people. It was organized on essentially European lines” (54). Prioritizing efficiency, “[i]ts efforts were mainly directed to material prosperity. [...] It introduced English law and English conceptions of justice, and English methods of education. It did everything to forward the economic exploitation of Indian territory, particularly where such exploitation could be of advantage to British

industry and trade” (54). The potential for conflict was inherently inscribed in this structure: “In shaping this system of government and in directing its policy the Indian had no part [...] inevitably the interests of India were sometimes not the interests of Britain, and where the interests were economic, those of India were sometimes sacrificed to those of Britain” (54-55).

Moreover, although the “ruling class” (55) of India was British, the system of English education meant, as Woolf argued, that “the State favoured the education of Indians on European lines” (55). It simultaneously “debarred Indians, however able and educated, from all the higher administrative posts” (56). The contradiction, he concluded, would prove fatal to the British Raj: “That education spread through India those Western ideas of democracy and nationality, of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, of which imperialism and the Government of India itself were the negation” (56).

Contemporaneously, having carried “the seeds of its own destruction” (56), a period of “complete revolt against Europe” (57) had begun: “The political principles of Europe are involved against Europe, and practically all English-speaking Indians demand self-government” (57). Woolf agreed with this demand, although in this 1928 work he framed his agreement more in terms of a pragmatic acknowledgment than considerations of social justice (the latter would gain more of a place in his 1960s autobiography):

The educated classes in India have ... succeeded in enlisting to a considerable extent the uneducated, agricultural classes in their revolt against British domination and in their demand for Home Rule. Political unrest has indeed reached such dimensions that the Government of India has been seriously embarrassed. It has become more and more clear that a continuation of the imperialist system of government in India, in the face of the active or passive hostility of all the educated classes, is impossible, and that sooner or later the demand for self-government will have to be granted. (58)

Woolf had published both *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1919) and *Economic Imperialism* (1920) with Allen & Unwin. But he published *Imperialism and Civilization* (1928) with the Hogarth Press, the first of several iterations of his political prose that would be disseminated by Hogarth. Among these, Willis finds that *After the Deluge* (1931) was “his most important work under his own imprint” (228). From its conception, “in effect it had been in the works for eleven years” (Willis 228). Willis explains the context: “Woolf had set out to investigate the 125-year period of history before the First World War as a means of understanding the dynamics of world events. Admitting in his autobiography that he was no sociologist, psychologist, or historian, Woolf recalled that he had wanted to do what ‘the professionals had left undone’ (Willis 228-29)

The second volume of *After the Deluge*, published by Hogarth in 1939, concentrated on the nineteenth century. In 1953, Woolf published *Principia Politica*, the third volume of the series, crediting Keynes for the title suggestion (PP vi). Woolf explained: “When Maynard Keynes read the first volume of *After the Deluge*, he said to me that I had chosen a bad title, that the book was really a study of the fundamental principles of political thought and action, and that I ought to have called it *Principia Politica*” (PP vi).

Craufurd Goodwin asserts that “[t]he closest parallel in Bloomsbury to the inconsistent expectations that play such a large part in Keynes’s *General Theory* can be found in Leonard Woolf’s three-volume political history of the West” (227). In *Principia Politica*, Woolf emphasizes, while analyzing Germany’s turn to fascism: “[T]he things which people judge to have the most intrinsic value, the ultimate ends of human action, are complex psychological states or ways of life” (PP 105). This is new for a Woolfian political analysis, even as it also strongly echoes a key aspect of Moore’s Edwardian-era ethical philosophy. Eschewing didacticism and condemning Hitler’s absolutist propagandizing, even as he makes

a sweeping claim for a modernist kind of “intrinsic value,” Woolf marks a significant shift from the purely literal economic focus of his earliest attempts at anti-imperialist prose in the early 1920s. Goodwin draws a further analogy between Woolf and Keynes, finding that not only does “Woolf see[] Western history dominated by the ebbs and flows of ‘communal psychology’ that reflect bodies of thought” – something of an analogue to Keynesian animal spirits, here at play in a wider political arena – but, similarly to Keynes’s observations in both *Economic Consequences* and the *General Theory*, in the beginning the first volume, Woolf “stresses the importance of ideas, even inchoate ones, which determine man’s fate” (Goodwin 227, citing *After the Deluge* I 23, 31). Goodwin suggests a direct line of influence between Woolf and Keynes in this regard: “Woolf’s comments about the influence of deceased thinkers on current affairs, published five years before the *General Theory*, may be compared to Keynes’s words on the same subject.” (Goodwin 227).

Peter Wilson notes that political scientists have been “mostly critical” (10) of Woolf’s contributions to international political thought in a post-World War Two context, but “there is, nonetheless, a marked reluctance to dismiss him as utopian” (10). Woolf was opposed by, and in turn was usually critical of, the more mainstream school of “realist” political thinkers, who were preoccupied with power politics and national interests to a much greater degree than with internationalism. However, as the excerpts from *Imperialism and Civilization* suggest, Woolf’s political writings are in fact marked with a strong overtone of pragmatism. Moreover, his fictions of empire are quite the opposite of “utopian.” *Village*, of course, ends with Beddagama’s destruction. In “Stories of the East,” a sequence of short stories published by the Hogarth Press in 1921,¹² Woolf is perhaps even more pessimistic about the colonialist

¹² The three stories were republished in 1962, as an appendix to the *Diaries in Ceylon* – an interesting cross-generic combination.

project as he continues to explore questions surrounding Ceylon in the context of British rule.

Willis categorizes “Stories of the East,” along with Leonard Woolf’s 1917 short story, “Three Jews,” as tales that “now seem diversions, serious enough for hand printing but not to be placed on a level with his two novels ... or with his Fabian Society and Labour party books” (55-56). But this, I think, is far too easy a dismissal of an essential part of Woolf’s writing across genres on the subject of his experience in Ceylon. It is true that, as Willis observes, these stories “owe...their method to Conrad and Kipling” (56). So does *Village*, where Woolf’s Conradian framing device at the beginning of the novel necessarily drops away at the end. The last sentient creature on the scene of the events that are supposedly being narrated retrospectively by a Conradian “I” is a “great boar” that “grunted softly” (*Village* 237). That is admittedly an unresolvable structural problem in a realist novel – and E. M. Forster critiqued the use of such a device, either in this manuscript or in a short story that began with a similar narrative structure – but it is not necessarily a critically dispositive one.

Willis also notes: “It is possible but unprovable without more evidence that Leonard Woolf wrote one or more of his Eastern stories earlier than his publication of them in 1921 would indicate” (57). Citing “an undated manuscript copy of “A Tale Told by Moonlight” in the Woolf papers at the University of Sussex library, together with fragments of other stories” (57). Willis suggests that these “might have been drafted when he was in Ceylon or soon after he returned to England” (57). Moreover, he cites a May 1912 letter from Forster to Woolf, which “referred to a draft of a story similar, if not identical, to “Pearls and Swine.” Forster liked the story Woolf had sent him, he wrote, and suggested that Woolf send it to the *English Review*” (57).

Forster did observe, of whichever manuscript Woolf had sent him in the spring of 1912: “It’s a good story. Try the English Review – I know of no other magazine that will pay for erections and excrement. Suggestions. New title. Shorten the Introduction and simplify its style [...] What about missing out the first ‘T’ altogether? What does the reader see through his eyes that he could not see without them?” (EMF Letters Vol I 135). The editors of Forster’s *Selected Letters* suggest in a note, conversely, that the manuscript in question was *Village*: “this may be a reference to a draft of Woolf’s novel, *The Village in the Jungle* (1913). [...] That novel had no other title, and nothing appeared in *The English Review*” (EMF Letters Vol. I 135 n.1). Forster’s critique in his letter to Woolf continues: “I enjoyed the story more the second reading, but still feel the touch of ‘scold’ about it, that often goads me in Kipling. [...] You seem a very good writer/tippy at describing the scenes I most want to see – e.g., the two deaths at the end” (EMF Letters Vol. I 135). This, too, could conceivably refer to *Village*, where PUNCHI MENIKA’s death follows that of another remaining villager, PUNCHIRALA, but it could, as Willis suggests, also conceivably refer to an earlier version of “A Tale Told by Moonlight.” Together with “Pearls and Swine,” these are stories with traumatic and disillusioning endings that are unmistakably caused by, and narrated to reveal grimly, the impacts of British colonialism.

In “Pearls and Swine,” Woolf sets up an initially somewhat didactic, but ultimately powerful, fictional framework for critiquing imperialism. He depicts a gathering of Englishmen in a hotel smoking room, one of whom, the rather metaphorically named “White,” eventually goes stark raving mad. Anindyo Roy explains: “Mr. White serves both as an extreme image of colonial delusion as well as the culminating figure in this narrative trauma,” even as his fellow imperialist Robson “reflect[s] an ethos of scientific management that had provided the economic and political basis for imperialism in the new century,” but

that also proves to be anything but rational (Roy, *Journal X* 3:1, 1998). Similarly, for Rosenfeld, “Pearls and Swine” “is an attack on the imperialist mentality in both its supposedly beneficent and its obviously malevolent forms; its end is a subversion of the racist dichotomy that labels natives beasts and colonizers natural masters and enlightened redeemers” (*Outsiders Together* 39).

Rosenfeld finds “A Tale Told by Moonlight” to be “perhaps Leonard Woolf’s most powerful allegory of imperialism” (*Outsiders Together* 50). As with *Village*, there has been some critical controversy over the interpretation of this story, in which an English colonialist, Reynolds, buys a Sinhalese woman, Celestinahami, out of a brothel; with no understanding possible between them, Celestinahami, dressed in English clothing, drowns herself. A gathering of English listeners unfamiliar with Ceylon, hearing the tale from another Englishman, Jessop, assume that it is a sentimental story of tragic love. Critics such as Jeanne Thwaites have condemned “A Tale Told by Moonlight” on this basis; Roy, however, like Rosenfeld, finds it a more subtle critique and condemnation of Reynolds’s assertion of colonialist privilege. For Roy, Woolf “articulates a troubling vision about the fundamental impossibility of holding on to a truly emancipatory politics while continuing to defend the standard liberal position on empire” (Roy, *Criticism*, Spring 2001).

If Leonard Woolf’s critique of imperialism was not fully formed by the time that he published *Village*, prior to the publication of *Stories of the East* (1921), that intellectual development was well underway. However, one aspect does not change in *Stories*: their tone is at least as harsh as in *Village*, their use of types as un-nuanced and didactic, their conclusions about British involvement in Ceylon as uncompromisingly bleak. Celestinahami’s death at the end of “A Tale Told by Moonlight,” her corpse floating with the tawdry remnants of English garments that she has pathetically attempted to adopt,

figures Woolf's condemnation of the imperialist project in vivid, metaphorical terms that are difficult to misinterpret. However, such imagery allows for little verbal nuance, far less the kind of advocacy that might have potential to marshal readers' support for a given program of anti-imperialist political change.

In significant ways, Woolf's earlier fiction is his most didactic work; his later political and autobiographical prose is, paradoxically, more "literary" in style and, substantively, more complex. From the unexamined death of Silindu's wife at the opening of *Village*, to the abandonment of Woolf's half-adopted Conradian framing device at its close, the difficulty of standing outside, fully critiquing and acknowledging his own complicity in imperialist structures, arguably contributes to this early stylistic mode – an echo of the Victorian "scold" that Forster diagnoses in Woolf's pre-World War One drafts. By the 1960s, as he writes his autobiography, these colonial structures have collapsed, at least nominally, despite continuing economic exploitation in Britain's former colonies. Reflecting upon these developments, Woolf's later insights encompass a more stylistically nuanced and substantively more self-critical perspective.

Woolf's shift to Fabian socialism, followed by his inquiry into the structures of imperialism – at first solely economic in focus, then adding a consideration of influences that are both cultural and psychological – eventually leads to an autobiographical insight with more general implications. In *Downhill All the Way*, Woolf emphasizes the epistemological irreducibility of uncertainty and "the impossibility of telling the truth, the extraordinary difficulty of unearthing facts" (9). Later in this 1967 volume, he describes something recognizable as Bloomsbury's characteristic method, although his context is at first glance limiting. Attempting to explain Virginia Woolf's process for composing fiction, he generalizes broadly:

...I have distinguished two markedly different – indeed almost antithetical – phases in Virginia’s creative process. This swing of the pendulum in the mind between conscious, rational, analytic, controlled thought and an undirected intuitive or emotional process almost always takes place where the mind produces something original or creative. It happens with creative thinkers, scientists, or philosophers, no less than with artists. (54)

Although Woolf’s claim is situated in the context of a description of Virginia Woolf’s mental instability, he immediately digresses to a famous anecdote about Archimedes and the bathtub (54-55). Moreover, this dual aspect similarly calls to mind Keynes’s description in his 1933 lectures, where the shift from vague, intuitive initial insight to crystallized economic theory is presented in terms that are pedagogical, not pathological, characterizing a deliberate process that is accessible to expert collaboration and rational debate.

Furthermore, the uncertainty about which manuscript, *Village* or “A Tale Told by Moonlight,” is the subject of E. M. Forster’s May 1912 letter highlights the importance, and the complexity, of Leonard Woolf’s cross-generic versioning as he revisits his experience in Ceylon, shifting over time from early reliance upon publishers recommended by Forster (Edward Arnold, Forster’s publisher, accepted *Village*) to the Woolfs’ own Hogarth Press. Arnold, as Gooneratne has shown, required a number of editorial changes from Woolf’s manuscript version of the novel. S.P. Rosenbaum emphasizes not only that Leonard Woolf’s goal with the Hogarth Press was not to lose money (although the press did prosper, simply maximizing sales would have been a very different, and counterproductive, goal), but also the value of having a press that brought with it accompanying editorial control: “The way the Hogarth Press was managed, largely by Leonard, had a direct bearing on the works of both the Woolfs. Leonard had suffered from other publishers more than Virginia” (21). Both of the Woolfs published prose elsewhere, but the Hogarth Press, as a node in their network of modernist print culture, served as a reliable locus of their own in the marketplace

of ideas, and even as it enabled Virginia Woolf's development of "modern fiction," it also enabled Leonard Woolf's iterative versioning and accompanying reevaluation and refinement of his anti-imperialist political theory.

Brenda Silver, theorizing that versions of a text should be read as complementary (Silver 193-222), emphasizes, regarding Virginia Woolf's drafts and published *oeuvre*: "Once we are aware of the manuscript versions and their alternate reading, it becomes impossible, except by a willed act of commitment to a particular interpretive stance, not to be conscious of their presence within the 'final' text" (194). Silver cites Jerome McGann's definition of a "work," in this print culture context, as "a series of specific texts," as well as acts of production and the process that encompasses both (Silver 218 n. 3, citing McGann 52). In his analysis of Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, John Whittier-Ferguson notes a foundational concept of version theory, namely, that "the critic should not discount or subordinate earlier or discarded versions" (300). He urges especially that "we need to read a text's versions as a series strung together like the moments Woolf summons from her past" (300). Here, the act of drafting can be conceptualized as "an instance of memory work" (300).

Whittier-Ferguson's theoretical approach to Woolf's late *oeuvre*, in which later variations in prose can be "strung together" with but need not be assumed to qualitatively supersede earlier ones, also, I think, offers a useful lens for assessing Leonard Woolf's cross-generic *oeuvre* on the subject of Ceylon, where passages from the Edwardian-era *Diaries*, restored to memory through the medium of print publication, are sometimes woven into his final mid-century masterwork. In Woolf's autobiography, drafts from the beginning and the end of his Sri Lankan experience are literally "strung together." Yet, mediated through memory, political engagement, and intervening version work, both, as juxtaposed texts and

simultaneously a palimpsest, are, like the name of the country that is the subject of his reflections, also utterly changed.

I would also argue that, insofar as version theory implies an iterative, non-absolutist method, it is congruent with the iterative epistemology that is foundational to the Bloomsbury “model.” Narrative tropes and figurative images based on his own empirical experience, intertwined with variations of Leonard Woolf’s developing political theory, recur and vary across genres in his *oeuvre*, as Britain’s empire progresses through the decades of the twentieth century toward its inevitable and, as Woolf would ultimately recognize, its not only politically pragmatic but ethically just diminution.

Conclusion: Bloomsbury and Contemporary Contexts

Analyzing the “double lens” of Bloomsbury’s modeling methodology in economics and in language contributes in new ways toward explaining Bloomsbury’s ongoing and considerable cultural influence (including, after several decades’ neglect in economics departments, the resurgence of attention that Keynes’s *General Theory* is experiencing now). These interdisciplinary lines of inquiry are, I believe, essential ones to explore in the context of Bloomsbury’s literature and economics, particularly at a time when – following large-scale and almost catastrophic failures in the performance of contemporary neoclassical economic models that over-privilege formalization and abstraction – it would be useful for critical attention to turn increasingly to a consideration of the mutual interrelation of economics, cultural studies and the humanities.

What might the stakes be today, for pedagogy in both literature and economics? One comment from jurist and law and economics theorist Richard A. Posner, writing in 2010, begins to suggest the value of this kind of inquiry: “Economists may have forgotten *The General Theory* and moved on, but they have not outgrown it or the informal mode of argument that it exemplifies, which can illuminate nooks and crannies closed to mathematics” (287). Interdisciplinary work, the interdisciplinarity that Bloomsbury itself exemplifies, can, perhaps, help scholars working in different fields to illuminate those “nooks and crannies.” Bloomsbury, with its openness to an experiential method that acknowledges the possibility of error, its iterative and non-absolutist narratives that visit and

revisit concepts of the “good life,” and its acceptance of the vagueness and uncertainty attendant upon “ordinary language,” offers a historical example that has particular, and renewed, resonance in the present moment of global economic crisis.

Moreover, for Bloomsbury in its own time, this empirical, non-absolutist method, and its members’ participation in communal dialogue and a questioning of earlier assumptions, enabled at least a partial shift away from limited, Edwardian-era private individualism toward a more public and expansive – and potentially transnational and global – conceptualization of Moore’s ethical imperative in the *Principia*. Bloomsbury moves from what we might call too-comfortably Mooreist private elitism, through increasing and culturally resonant public engagement during the economic and political crises of the 1930s and the onset of the Second World War, and does so not to break with its old ethical code but to further it.

But caution is necessary here, and both epistemological and cultural limitations must be recognized in a historical context. These discordant notes are most striking during the “Old Bloomsbury” era. They lessen, but only to some extent, by the 1930s. For example, an unsettling moment in Virginia Woolf’s 1915 diary sounds a note of insularity and unexamined prejudice toward “outsiders” that marks a disturbing contrast from Woolf’s later reflections on the value of “outsidership.” In this January 9, 1915 diary entry, Woolf describes her unexpected crossing of paths with residents of a local Kingston area institution for the developmentally challenged: “[O]ne realized that everyone in that long line was a miserable ineffective shuffling idiotic creature [...] It was perfectly horrible. They should certainly be killed” (13). Janet Lyon captures the contemporary reader’s appalled response – unlike Woolf, not toward the young people, but rather toward Woolf’s recoil and its unthinkable, fascist echoes that would follow in a generation on the Continent: “That final

sentence still manages to shock, even when we know it is coming” (Lyon 558). Woolf’s unfortunate perspective in this diary entry is mirrored and repeated in varying contexts, even into the 1930s, among members of Bloomsbury. Historian Richard Overy reports that Keynes, for example, not only “helped set up the Cambridge Eugenics Society before 1914” but that he “remained a life-long supporter” (106).

Forster, by contrast, is unexpectedly revealing in his early rupture of Edwardian-era fictional norms at the conclusion of *Howards End*. He unsettles readers’ expectations with new patterns of family and inheritance, but especially with the incongruous death of Leonard Bast. Leonard’s death in the novel is rooted in two causes, but those causes bear a commonality in their foregrounding of economic violence. Literally crushed by the cultural and class machinery that his ambition and idealism cannot overcome, Leonard, collapsed, expires under the unsubtle weight of the books that Forster and his Bloomsbury cohort will continue to create. Against this backdrop, a Wilcox and a Schlegel establish their new union, which does promise some possibility of social and cultural change. But given its discomfiting conclusion, Forster’s pre-World War One novel can hardly be mistaken for anything resembling a tidy *bildungsroman* that promotes nineteenth-century assumptions of fixed class and familial certainties.

Examples of the converse, persisting by the outset of World War Two, ruffle too-easy claims about any kind of perfectability of Bloomsbury’s iterative epistemological model. The figurative “bookshelves” continue to fall on the fictional, displaced Crosbys – whom at least the charitable Eleanor likens to a “dog,” as she follows a Pargiter brother around Abercorn Terrace (*Years* 215), even as the living, sketched workers in Woolf’s diaries of the 1930s throw harsh light upon the realities of economic violence that underlies, sustains, and to some degree must call into question the ultimate scope of Bloomsbury’s intellectual and

cultural work, and certainly the historically and culturally immediate cost of such work to others in their own time, both in England and across national and global borders.

There are of course partial recognitions and partial ameliorations from the “Old Bloomsbury” of the Edwardian era to its more reflective, less utopian, late modern version. These are important; they help to illuminate Raymond Williams’s observations about Bloomsbury’s impact as a progressive “fraction” of its class. But for Bloomsbury, there is never a full-scale or sustainable paradigm shift. Leonard Bast and his fellows in economic and cultural privation make few inroads against the looming, material representations of print culture that not only exclude but quite literally destroy at least human potential and quality of life, and for the most unfortunate of Bast’s class cohort, even too soon, life itself. In ways that cannot really be resolved or mitigated, Bloomsbury’s own self-reflection always remains limited and insufficient, allowing an opening for criticism such as the Leavises’: is Bloomsbury’s fiction too narrow in scope, too aesthetically refined, a product of privilege that may be exaggerated to the point of literary and cultural irrelevance? Is it even at times, as Q. D. Leavis argues of *Three Guineas* in *Scrutiny* (1938), evidence of a desire “to uproot criticism root and branch in the Nazi manner” (208) – where the “manner” is perhaps more open to rebuke than the substantive, and often progressive, political arguments?

I think it is another Leonard – Leonard Woolf – who, by the 1960s, comes closest to making the epistemological shift to a new, post-Bloomsbury paradigm. In *Beginning Again* (1964), Woolf, likening himself to Rilke’s caged panther, notes in his Foreword: “[A]nother thought, a terrible doubt, came to me. There are other bars, permanent bars of the cage of one’s own life, through which one has always and will always gaze at the world” (13). Recognizing this, he also charts an effort to escape the bars of those “permanent” assumptions – a long-standing attempt, with its genesis in his return to England from Ceylon,

and his turn to Fabian socialism. By 1939, doggedly planting iris and declining to listen as Hitler rants on the wireless (*Downhill* 254) – yet of course throughout this time continuing his political and literary work – Woolf slips past the old model, perhaps in the actual moment, and certainly in his autobiographical reflections.

We can discern genuine achievement of a kind of individually detached yet politically and socially engaged impersonality in these lines. But Leonard Woolf's autobiography is written from the perspective of temporal and sociocultural distance. Moreover, his gardening imagery is conflated with a persistent troping of the Woolfs' houses as private sphere, set against and in balance to the public arena: "[W]hat has the deepest and most permanent effect upon oneself and one's way of living is the house in which one lives" (*Downhill* 14). Turning from fascist broadcast to English garden is as much a momentary retreat as a move in the long game of impersonal detachment that helps Leonard Woolf sustain resistance to the political and economic violence of the twentieth century.

Pursuing this question to a coda, not until ninety years after Bloomsbury's ascendancy, as she revisits and revises the tropes of *Howards End*, does Zadie Smith rewrite the fictional script. In Smith's contemporary novel, *On Beauty* (2005), Howard Belsey's son, Levi, bridges class and race, surviving his own approach to the "libraries" of his era, which in his case store not print but music. Even if in a limited and partial way, Bloomsbury's writers did "work" for this new literary achievement – which is, not by accident, no offspring of James Joyce's high modernist epic *Ulysses* (these include Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and more recently, Smith's *NW*), but a middlebrow novel. Almost a century later, Smith, herself a graduate of King's College, Cambridge, innovates and builds upon an ongoing line of influence in her *oeuvre*, drawing upon her transatlantic experiences of two Cambridges, one of

them the place where Forster and Keynes made their decades-long home, and from which Virginia Woolf was excluded.

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