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# How the soul slips in: Virginia Woolf's (un)natural history of dogs

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HOW THE SOUL SLIPS IN: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S (UN)NATURAL HISTORY OF DOGS

A Thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of English  
The University of Mississippi

by

ALLISON CASTLE COMBS

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## ABSTRACT

Dogs have a crucial place in articulating ideas about class and sexuality in Woolf and her milieu. Her works move from considering dogs as representative instruments of class and gender in *Mrs. Dalloway*, to thinking more complexly about the dog/human boundary in *Orlando*. Human-to-animal ontologies are an evaluation of human biopolitical affiliations, where human social categories and function are embedded and reflected in canine behavior. The “anthropological machine” and the fabulated nature of the human world is exposed in contact zones associated with problems of sexuality, class, and gender, as these internal and external distinctions are able to evade human social typologies, especially in relation to the political and cultural metamorphosis of the interwar period. By identifying how canine signifiers operate, human-making ontologies are better understood. Animality is not an earmark of the “other,” rather it is more often revealed when compulsions of the State are at work on unstable human categories. Woolf uses animals (specifically dogs) because they are a natural proxy to human social structural functionalism. Dogs are fundamentally expressive despite their willingness to please a master; moreover, dogs do not control their desires or physicality as that is generally imposed upon them. Animal selfhood is not easily discoverable or evident, and is thus punished or ignored; they are queered by the perpetually human-driven insistence that they unnaturally accommodate a world exploited by human interest. In *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando*, animality is foregrounded where the boundaries between human and animal collapse, and it is under this weight of censorship-by-way-of-animal where nonhuman taxonomies interpolate and correspond with human social hierarchies.

## DEDICATION

To second chances and silver linings.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In no particular order, I would like to thank Jaime Harker, Karen Raber, and Ian Whittington for their wisdom, guidance, and patience.

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## HOW THE SOUL SLIPS IN: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S (UN)NATURAL HISTORY OF DOGS

“Dogs are the fashion because we can fashion them to our will. Dogs, much more than cats, can be made objects of conspicuous leisure; they can be rendered completely incapable of fending for themselves and made demonstrable objects of continual expense and care (whoever saw a cat wearing a little coat in the cold weather?). The highly-bred dog can have its whole frame twisted and distorted into shapes of the most astonishing kind. An uninstructed observer would suppose that the owners and vendors of these crippled and unhealthy animals must of necessity be exceedingly cruel. Such accusations would, however, be unjust; the torturers are genuinely devoted to their victims.”  
—Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery*<sup>1</sup>

“But it is I that am a wretch,” she reflected, once they were in complete obscurity again, “for base as you may be, am I not still baser? It is you who nourish and protect me, you who scare the wild beast, frighten the savage, make me clothes of the silk worm’s wool, and carpets of the sheep’s. If I want to worship have you not provided me with an image of yourself and set it in the sky? Are not evidences of your care everywhere? How humble, how grateful, how docile, should I not be, therefore? Let it be all my joy to serve, honour, and obey you.”

—Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*<sup>2</sup>

### WOOLF'S NARRATIVE GENESIS

Four months before anchoring her pockets with stones and wading into the River Ouse, Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) finished the autobiographical essay entitled, “Sketch of the Past.” This treatise emerges as a swan song in its disclosure of the “exceptional” memories that would eventually influence her literary design, thus gifting her writing philosophy posthumously to

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<sup>1</sup> Bell, Quentin. *On Human Finery*. 1947. Reprint. London: Allison & Busby, 1992, pp. 55-56

<sup>2</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando: A Biography*. Ed. Mark Hussey. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006. p.151.



readers. Between tracing the movements of an encroaching German army and her unceremonious promise of suicide, “Sketch of the Past” dogtrots past literary ciphers to reveal the rationale behind her character sketches. Haunted by familial ghosts, Woolf learns to negotiate the horrors of her formative years in her ability to recognize the “instincts, affections, passions, attachments”<sup>3</sup> associated with these events into more definable “moments of being.” The staging ground of her fragmentation, and the subsequent need to create order from the violent shocks brought on by traumatic incidents begins with her aversion to mirrors, as one in particular would be witness to a sexual assault by her much older half-brother, Gerald Duckworth (1870-1937). This event revealed what she describes as an animal peering silently behind a compliant corporal scaffold. Woolf dreams that she “was looking in a glass when a horrible face—the face of an animal—suddenly showed over my shoulder. I cannot be sure if this was a dream, or if it happened.”<sup>4</sup> Recognizing the animal “behind the cotton wool” that is ubiquitously present in her work is where the internal and external distinctions of what it means to be human is better understood. Woolf had the ability to recognize herself as an animal; to be classified as human is something not easily identifiable or static, and in most cases a status that is granted in moments of perfect autonomy. Moreover, this status is one that is entirely subjective and in relation to how one is pushed and pulled by sociocultural constructs.

Indeed, Carl Linnaeus recognized the human-animal problem in his observation and classification of ape species, finding difficulty in pinpointing the discernable differences between anthropoid man and ape from a scientific perspective, as noted in his 1758 study of animals and plants, *Systema Naturae*.<sup>5</sup> Giorgio Agamben lingers over Linnaeus’s observations in his work,

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<sup>3</sup> *Moments of Being* 79-80

<sup>4</sup> *Moments of Being* 69.

<sup>5</sup> Agamben, *The Open*. 23. Although Linnaeus first published *Systema Naturae* in 1735, Agamben refers to the wieldy 10<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 1758. I stay with Agamben’s point of reference, “man,” as it is both Agamben’s

*The Open* (2003) noting that Linnaeus categorized both man and apes as primates, the difference is that “*man is the animal that must recognize itself as human to be human.*”<sup>6</sup> Woolf’s “moments of being” are then a Dasein experience,<sup>7</sup> wherein the idea “to be human” is in seeing “humans” as a fabulation of animals existing within a political machine.<sup>8</sup> The dog in particular articulates ideas about class and sexuality in Woolf and her milieu, as the dog is singularly evolving alongside human culture, providing a mirror image revealing external “human” distinctions at work on the body. In Woolf’s work, the presence of a dog signals that there is an “anthropological machine” exerting pressure on personal agency and desire. Networks of “human-making” paradigms obscure the taxonomy of *Homo sapiens*, fluctuating between the mercurial status of “sovereign” or “beast.”<sup>9</sup> This human/dog boundary is revealed in Woolf’s work when her marginalized characters are in contact with androcentric domination. This animality is not, however, necessarily relegated to female-only characters, as I will demonstrate in the next two chapters with Woolf’s World War I veteran, Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*, as well as the titular hero in *Orlando*. Neither is Woolf drawing a straight line towards the subjugation of women in a patriarchal system. Instead, she interrogates her socially positioned female characters who are consciously powerless within their social networks because of their gender. These women tend to be shamefully vicious towards other women within and without their social circles in solidarity with the hegemonic order. Therefore, this woman-on-woman

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and Linnaeus’s work that I am referencing. By not employing more inclusive terms such as “people” or “human(s),” there is certainly some incongruity between the philosophies they are critiquing and their chosen linguistic apparatus.

<sup>6</sup> *The Open*. 26. Italics, Agamben.

<sup>7</sup> I use the term “Dasein” as it applies to Heidegger’s theories in existentialism. However Woolf reinterprets “dasein” as a “moment of being,” and it is her terminology in which I’m attempting to define through the help of Heidegger’s work.

<sup>8</sup> The boundary of “human” is in recognition of what Agamben calls the “optical machine,” in which man is “deformed” by structures of power; only in “man’s” awareness of his non-humanness may then become human. *The Open*, 27. “Fabulation” borrowed from Robert Scholes.

<sup>9</sup> Terms borrowed from Agamben.

violence is a mimesis of the Victorian/Edwardian edifice in which they exist; where heteronormative, blue blood masculinity is privileged and reproduced by outmoded demagogues clambering for power and relevance against an era of social progress. Yet again, “social progress” is merely another spectacle of supposed order that will eventually decay, taking with it the animal corpses who are loyal to their master or State structure. Finally, no one in *Mrs. Dalloway* or *Orlando* is above his or her animality, merely this human/dog boundary is produced when the “anthropological machine” fails or slips.

### *ENTRE LE CHIEN ET LE LOUP*

To Virginia Woolf, the presence of the aristocratic subject in the English novel was of great importance because the concept of Englishness was “so steeped in the ups and downs of social rank that without them [the English novel] would be unrecognizable.”<sup>10</sup> Like her modernist contemporaries, early twentieth century fiction tended to be concerned with a displacement from a past that was deeply rooted in the old regime. The final collapse of the landed gentry took place across the fin de siècle in what was “one of the most profound economic and psychological changes of the period.”<sup>11</sup> However, the landed aristocracy retained social capital well beyond the collapse of the feudalistic state, as they were still able to profit from capitalism while resisting the process of modernization. Both the decline and privilege of the aristocracy permeated modernist literature as “contemporaneity was often centrally constructed against concepts of tradition and hierarchy that estate culture and the patrician

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<sup>10</sup> Virginia Woolf, “The Niece of Earl,” in *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life. Selected Essays*, vol. II, edited by Rachel Bowlby (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 93.

<sup>11</sup> David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 125.

system were made to embody in fiction.”<sup>12</sup> In *Aristocracies of Fiction*, Len Platt notes that Edwardian popular fiction typically constructed aristocracy in terms of function, and while these characterizations worked to preserve a romantic “ideal,” the fictionalization operated as a democratization of the noble. Nonetheless, in what had become the “bourgeois century,”<sup>13</sup> the aristocrat represented, in the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, an onerous and redundant class. Moreover, it was a class that precariously held onto status and authority, vulnerable to the rising professional and merchant classes who profited from a burgeoning economy.

Turning from the rigidity of Victorianism towards capitalism and social mobility fractured human perception and subjectivity, opening up new scientific and literary possibilities. It is “one of the hallmarks of modernism” Caroline Hovanec notes, where “*perspectivism*—the multiplicity, contingency, and the variety of standpoints from which one might view the world”<sup>14</sup>—and a literary style that Woolf engaged with in her writing. The animal body offered a new framework from which to understand the human experience. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries instituted a new way of thinking about human identity in relation to other sentient life by moving beyond religious explanations towards the scientific understanding of humanity in relation to the natural world. Animal related discourses revealed a growing concern with social dominance. Charles Darwin’s foundational work in *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) makes explicit the continuity between human and animals, stating that “the varieties of man seem to act on each other in the same way as the different species of animals—the stronger always extirpating the weaker.”<sup>15</sup> To make sense of the human condition,

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<sup>12</sup> Len Platt, *Aristocracies of Fiction: The Idea of Aristocracy in Late-Nineteenth- Century and Early-Twentieth-Century Literary Culture* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>13</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), 12.

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Hovanec. “Philosophical Barnacles and Empiricist Dogs: Knowing Animals in Modernist Literature and Science.” *Configurations* 21.3 (2013): 245.

he looked towards animals, often using a dog as his point of reference. British philosopher, Herbert Spencer too adopts the dog as a stand-in for his theories of human primitivism, where animality springs out of deviations from rationality.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter, animal subjectivity was at the forefront of scientific and philosophical discourse. Friedrich Nietzsche's novel, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1891) resembles Woolf's interrogation of human-animal relations where he transposes the political-economic system of the "noble" and "servile" onto the natural world.<sup>17</sup> In his work, the taxonomy of nonhuman animals doubles as a human ecology. Woolf reworks this notion in *Mrs. Dalloway* by using the dog as the epitome of the master-servant relationship as it functions within the aristocratic philosophy of power, breeding, and eugenics. Harriet Ritvo examines this phenomenon, arguing that dogs and horses were considered to be the closest species in relation to humans, often characterized as the "nobles" of the animal world. Dogs best serve the dichotomy of the master-servant relationship in that dogs "whose single-minded devotion inspired [their] 'conqueror[s] with feelings close to the esteem,' normally reserved for human beings."<sup>18</sup> The dog naturally subordinates to a human master in a relationship that reflected the idea of civilization, which requires control over a subservient who is driven to offer allegiance. As I will argue, for Virginia Woolf the Kennel Club reenacts this structural functionality within human societies on similar terms.

In *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin associates the love shared between man and dog with a mother's love for a child. This is a distinctly singular observation of man's interspecies

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1845; rpt. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and the American Museum of Natural History, 1960), 433.

<sup>16</sup> Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, vol. 1 (1876; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1897), 125-33.

<sup>17</sup> Alphonso Lingis, "Nietzsche and Animals," *Animal Philosophy: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*. Ed. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco. (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> Harriet Ritvo. *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 21.

relationships with other animals.<sup>19</sup> Arguing that, “[t]he all-important emotion of sympathy is distinct from that of love. A mother may passionately love her sleeping and passive infant, but she can then hardly be said to feel sympathy for it. The love of a man for his dog is distinct from sympathy, and so is that of a dog for his master,” Darwin positions the dog as naturally submissive to man, observing the dog in such a way that the animal is never quite vindicated of an interminable servitude. Using what would be considered a “natural” pairing in a mother-child relationship is a peculiar comparison to the interspecies man-dog relationship because this correlation is based on a dominant/submissive dyad. Further, dog and child are placed on equal ground. There is the assumption that one who has individual autonomy is then compelled to govern the survival over another. Further, Darwin’s comparison between dog and child suggests that the dog figures in as a primeval human who requires human support in order to progress beyond the status of animal. The idea of love here is positioned as a germination of obedience and necessity rather than instinctual behavior, although Darwin at times attempts to claim otherwise. These affective ties are indeed kinship associations, however these exchanges take place on a chain of command within a “human-making” machine. To be “human” is then something that must be created and recognized by an individual, as well as the panoptical assurance by those around him.

Although it would not be until 2003 when Giorgio Agamben would publish his seminal work, *The Open: Man and Animal*, Woolf’s work eerily corresponds with his historical analysis of the human-animal boundary and the creation of the “anthropological machine.” Agamben begins his critique by examining thirteenth century Hebrew representations of “theriomorphous archons,” wherein the remnants of Israel—“the righteous who are still alive at the moment of the

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<sup>19</sup> Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, Chapter III 77-78.

Messiah's coming"<sup>20</sup>—are depicted with animal heads and human bodies. The final events of human history are thus marked by man's "reconcil[iation] with his animal nature."<sup>21</sup> Thereafter, Agamben follows human and animal philosophies put forth by Hobbes, Hegel, Bataille, Heidegger, Kojève, and others in order to express the problems of man becoming animal and visa versa.<sup>22</sup> Agamben exposes the boundary between man and animal as one that is mutable; man becomes animal through discursive and often racialized rhetoric, but too, man becomes animal in acts of violence whether he is the one meting out punishment or receiving it. The status of "man" is then a fabricated taxonomy that is produced by an "optical machine,"<sup>23</sup> where the animal lingers underneath human distinctions created by the polis. Agamben's nihilistic evaluation of "modern" civilization is analogous to Woolf's Septimus Smith, where Septimus's intentions of suicide are spawned by his contact with the "zone of indifference."<sup>24</sup> His encounters with war, and his dehumanization through medical discourse allow him to see both sides of the anthropological machine— "to see a dog become a man!"<sup>25</sup> Septimus becomes animal through his enlistment with the military. He is at first granted sovereignty by dutifully performing violence on behalf of the State, however this sovereign status degenerates in his participation with acts of war, as war requires one to become animal in order to kill. On London soil, civilian "peace" reenacts the visage of war in its exclusion of Septimus from the anthropomorphic social network because his mental and physical trauma ultimately inhibits his participation with the machine. Thus, Woolf's novelistic world of war and peace puts forth the "anthropological machine" as an eternal condition of being human, commensurate with Agamben's eviscerated

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<sup>20</sup> *The Open 2*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid. 2*.

<sup>22</sup> I defer to "man" and "him," rather than the more inclusive "human" or "people" because Agamben uses these references.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid. 27*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid. 37-8*. Agamben refers to the "zone of indifference" as inhabiting an empty space that is neither human nor animal.

<sup>25</sup> *Mrs. Dalloway 255*.

bee captivated by the honey before him.<sup>26</sup> It is thus suggested that man's "nature" is to act with the impulsivity of an animal without recognizing either his animal nature or the world around him. Although Agamben articulates an association between man and ape, Woolf uses the ubiquity of domestic dogs in modern human society as revelatory evidence of the anthropological machine, as the coevolution of human and canine culture forges a more convincing link between the human/animal boundary.

Virginia Woolf's father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was well known for his studies in evolutionary ethics and his editorship of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Nevertheless, it was an associate of Woolf's father, Carveth Read, who would augment Darwin's work by examining how and in what ways wolf-dog behavior aligns with human community formation.<sup>27</sup> In his 1917 essay "On the Differentiation of the Human From the Anthropoid Mind," and his later 1920 publication, *The Origin of Man*, Read argues that the sympathetic links between man and dog are drawn cogently together, as both share a fundamental sociality understood as pack dynamics.<sup>28</sup> Despite our closer kinship ties and physical resemblances with the chimpanzee, Read suggests that the evolution of man follows wolf-dog behavior because of analogous in-group cooperation.<sup>29</sup> Both wolf-dogs and humans form hierarchal societies where dominance plays a key role in social order. Read argues that human and dog "packs" have a leader and order of precedence based on battle. The primordial design of British Imperialism interconnects with the territorial habits of the wolf-dog, in so much as the pack will become aggressive to "strangers

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<sup>26</sup> *The Open* 52.

<sup>27</sup> Virginia Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, was a member of a group called "Scratch Eight" of whom Carveth Read was also a member. Maitland, Frederic William. *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*. London: Duckwork & Co., 1906. p. 363.

<sup>28</sup> Read, Carveth. "On the Differentiation of the Human From the Anthropoid Mind." *British Journal of Psychology*. 8.4 (1917): 395-422. Qtd. 404.

<sup>29</sup> Read 403-404.



of its own species.”<sup>30</sup> Akin to the exclusionary acts committed in order to preserve a narrow set of national identity markers, wolf dogs will kill (and sometimes eat) an outsider,<sup>31</sup> which is a reflection of the bodily removal or violence committed in human communities against the foreigner, the orphaned, the homosexual, the mentally ill, physically disabled, the racialized “other,” and the impoverished. Read suggests that these acts of dominance maintain the boundaries of small groups—such as nationalities, parties, and classes—all of which resemble a hunting-pack.<sup>32</sup>

Materially significant is Read’s observation that there is a “recognizable table of precedence amongst [pack] members,”<sup>33</sup> thus sidling ever closer to Georg Simmel’s foundational study of metropolitan life in the modern era in which he argues that human social structures are organized in small circles where individual members are required to adhere to “strict boundaries and a centripetal unity.”<sup>34</sup> Modern life is distinguished by a sense of dehumanization brought about by the “calculative exactness” of an increasingly capitalistic society that depends on quantitative values, and thus “irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits and impulses”<sup>35</sup> are repressed in order for communities to thrive. Simmel advances his argument to include any small social circle of any time period, as these methods of self-preservation carry over to political, kinship, and religious associations over time.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Simmel’s approach to modern socialization is merely an advanced construction of the wolf pack social structure. Human materialities thus costume what is an “anthropomorphous” animal. These theories concerning pack dynamics and social order easily articulate the interpersonal relationships in *Mrs. Dalloway*

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<sup>30</sup> Read 406.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 407.

<sup>32</sup> Read, *The Origin of Man*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925. p. 48.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 407.

<sup>34</sup> Simmel, Georg. “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” *The City Cultures Reader*. Ed. Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall, and Iain Borden. London: Routledge. 2000. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 16.

and *Orlando* in the way that each character has a social function that is predicated on submission or dominance to another member. The biting and barking dogs that appear in nearly every one of Woolf's works exemplify the analogy that people often resemble dogs in their implication in complex zoosocial networks.

Woolf's human-animal philosophy grows out of her personal experiences, one that she reflects on in her recollections of her mother, Julia Prinsep Stephen (née Jackson, formerly Duckworth), who died in 1895 when Woolf was thirteen years old. Julia was known for her beauty and Victorian dignity, but also for her severity towards the daughter from her first marriage and Woolf's half-sister, Stella Duckworth. Woolf observed that Stella was "devot[ed]" to their mother, describing her as "almost canine in [her] touching adoration"<sup>37</sup> despite these affections left unrequited. When questioned about her severity towards her daughter, Julia Stephen replied that she felt Stella was "'part of myself'."<sup>38</sup> Stella would shadow their mother and copy her stoic behavior with canine-like affection, but she still managed to maintain a semblance of individuality that was markedly honest and humble, with "sensitiveness to real things."<sup>39</sup> Stella would die suddenly two years after her mother's untimely death from influenza, which attests to Julia Stephen's belief that she and her daughter were inseparable in body yet remained spiritually divergent. Julia Stephen's cold, Victorian dignity plays conspicuously throughout *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando* as an omnipresent mother figure that suspends itself over these novels as an abstract symbol of authority. This façade of power masks the anxiety and fear of Woolf's characters whose social positioning is based on control, as they too are mere chattel in a hierarchal system that is in constant flux. This analysis will delve more deeply into the networks of authority in Woolf's work, but first it is necessary to understand the other half of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 97.

this dyad, as the focus of this study is weighted on how Stella Duckworth's canine-like allegiance to her mother plays a significant role in these two novels.

Stella's affectionate loyalty towards her mother influenced her sense of personal agency, as her selfhood—despite their personality differences—was “unquestionably” dependent on her mother's disposition. Woolf describes the relationship between her mother and sister as being two dissonant pieces that are made whole once joined together: Stella was the animal half to Julia's anthro-Victorian veneer. Still, the canine-like devotion Stella had for her mother filters through *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando* in fascinating ways. Woolf's characters are anthropomorphous animals who are “clothed” in “human-making” signifiers. In her work, dog breeds and dog behavior resemble human societies; yet despite caricatured appearances—the hard-hearted dowager, the ordered party host, or the passionate aristocrat—these characters are *feeling* animals brought to heel by a higher authority, perpetually driven to perform within the machine.

#### “CE CHIEN EST À MOI” – *A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN*

The sympathetic link between Stella and canine animality is filtered into Woolf's interpersonal relationships as a means for demonstrative communication. Maureen Adams traces Virginia Woolf's history with dogs in her book *Shaggy Muses*, noting that Woolf had used the canine body to express affection since her early childhood.<sup>40</sup> Her dog, Shag (who inadvertently turned out to be an expensive mutt), a sheepdog named Gurth, and a “mongrel” fox terrier named Grizzle (who makes an appearance in *Mrs. Dalloway*), are her oft-mentioned canine companions throughout her diaries and biographies. In some of her earliest published letters, Woolf expresses

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<sup>40</sup> Adams, 197.

affection for her friend and maybe lover, Violet Dickinson, who was likely the source of Woolf's first lesbian awakening. Channeling Violet's dog, Rupert, she asks Violet to "kiss your dog on its tender snout, and think him me," writing suggestively, "I think with joy of certain exquisite moments when Rupert and I lick your forehead with a red tongue and a purple tongue; and twine your hairs round our noses."<sup>41</sup> From a young age, Woolf articulates sexual desire by doubling herself with a dog, possibly in an effort to shield her writing from judgmental eyes, but more than likely because unlike humans, dogs are free to express sexuality.

The most famous of Woolf's dogs was perhaps the purebred Cocker Spaniel named Pinka, who was a gift from Vita Sackville-West.<sup>42</sup> Prior to their love affair, their flirtatious epistolary exchange becomes increasingly intimate with Woolf referring to herself as Vita's "humble spaniel," seducing her as a dog-woman by wistfully hoping for Vita to reprimand her with a "rap on the poor spaniel's nose."<sup>43</sup> Thereafter, the nickname "Potto" represents their romantic affection as a canine imaginary traded between the two.<sup>44</sup> In *Orlando*, Vita is cast in the likeness of Pinka the Spaniel, the dog who stands in as the affective link between the two women.

Virginia Woolf spoke of love between "Pottos" and "Grizzles": the first with a traceable lineage to "royalty" and the other, a mixed-breed terrier. Woolf sees her dog Grizzle as her animal duplicate as she anticipates Vita's return from Persia, writing, "Remember your dog Grizzle and your Virginia, waiting you; both rather mangy; but what of that? These shabby mongrels are always the most loving, warm hearted creatures. Grizzle and Virginia will rush

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<sup>41</sup> *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, no. 381, no. 424.

<sup>42</sup> Adams, 200-226.

<sup>43</sup> *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, no. 1596.

<sup>44</sup> Conniving a reunion, Vita writes to Virginia Woolf: "This letter is principally to say that Potto is not very happy; he mopes; and I am not sure he has not got the mange; so he will probably insist on being brought back to Mrs. Woolf." Sackville-West, *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*, 313.

down to meet you—they will lick you all over” (*The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, no. 1628).

Camouflaging their same-sex attraction in a triangulation of desire, their class delineation hangs between them as Woolf gravitates to this margin of difference on several occasions in her diaries and revisited in *Orlando*.<sup>45</sup>

Virginia Woolf would go on to fashion her character Orlando after the magnanimous spaniel in dedication to Vita, but the novel also demonstrates how conspicuously aware Woolf was of Vita’s aristocratic background; these identifiers will be explored in more detail in chapter II. In her diary, Woolf documents her first visit to Vita’s estate in Sussex which reads as an amorous vignette of a long-legged Vita striding to Woolf, trailed by a pack of dogs led by a stately Elkhound named Canute.<sup>46</sup> Canute greets Orlando when she returns home from Constantinople as a woman, and again at the close of the novel, Canute joins Orlando in the twentieth century (O 125, 237). In turn, Vita’s image is replayed in *Orlando*, silhouetted “by such elk hounds and spaniels as chose to follow her” (O 231). The canine body is thus an analogue of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf’s epistolary exchange where they intimately refer to each other through the behavior and names of their canine companions—troping the allegory of animal as substitute for sexual liaisons and affection.

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<sup>45</sup> “After tea, looking for letters of Dryden’s to show me, she tumbled out a love letter of Ld Dorset’s (17th century) with a lock of his soft gold tinted hair which I held in my hand a moment. One had a sense of links fished up into the light which are usually submerged. Otherwise no particular awe or any great sense of difference or distinction. They are not a brilliant race. The space & comeliness of it all struck me” (*Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Sunday 23 January). Although it seems as if she is unimpressed by Vita’s pedigree, Woolf saw her as coming from another “race.” In 1922, Vita Sackville-West published the history of her family estate, Knole in west Kent. In the book, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, the estate’s noble associations are traced from 1456 and end with an account of the late nineteenth century. In 1539, Knole was given to King Henry VIII. Thereafter, the estate passed down through Earls and Dukes. When Vita’s father died, she was unable to inherit the property because the estate was entailed to the male line. Aside from actual Princes and Queens, Vita Sackville-West’s bloodline was quite regal and well connected.

<sup>46</sup> Anne Oliver Bell, ed. *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf*, vol.3, p. 125.

## “A REAL OLD COCKING DOG”

Woolf’s channeling of class anxieties through canine figures resonates with a longer history of such parallels. At the turn of the century, the exploitation of animals, particularly horses and dogs, illustrated the ways in which the highest social classes were able to exclude the middling classes as well as model aristocratic decorum. In his influential work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), American sociologist Thorstein Veblen demonstrates how the patrician system remained active in modernity through the dynamics of “conspicuous consumption,”<sup>47</sup> a concept that reproduced and maintained social structures through the pursuit of leisure and consumption. Early twentieth century London was a bustling city of bourgeois and working class bodies mingling under the haze of industry, touting the imperialist triumphs in far off lands with the erection of statues and military exhibitions. Underneath the pomp and grandeur however, there was both the instruction and influence of the old imperial regime.

Well-bred canine companions were a popular adornment in visual representations of the British Empire, notably so in Renaissance era portraiture where they functioned as symbols of wealth, fidelity, or wantonness.<sup>48</sup> However, it was in the Victorian era when dog breeding became a fashionably expensive obsession. Virginia Woolf saw dog breeding and dog shows as a way for people to project shifting class associations onto malleable animal bodies, thereby dominating the natural world, and producing a semblance of order. In turn, however, dog breeding and showing revealed anxieties over human problems with the instability of hierarchy and social position. Fanciers bred dogs according to the desire to produce specific physiognomies, sometimes correlating these traits to their workability, assisting their human

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<sup>47</sup> Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. (NY: Macmillan, 1899) pp. 64-70.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 116.

handlers with shepherding or guarding livestock, hunting vermin, or retrieving game. These eugenic standards had dire consequences for the dogs who did not fit the rigorous physical and behavioral parameters of breed standards, markedly so after they were taken from pastoral estates into the confines of the city. It is easier to put an “imperfect” hound out to pasture where a “cur” dog could wag for a farmer or a kennel owner. In the latter, a “mongrel” dog can provide a modicum of difference from the well-bred stock in order to reaffirm their inequality. The city however, provided no such sanctuary, and as one breeder put it, “[n]obody who is anybody can afford to be followed about by a mongrel dog.”<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, the performance of the higher classes is what matters, and it is this performance that Virginia Woolf was concerned with in her writing. Like mutts and strays, the proletarian classes are also survivors who are allowed the scope for comical misbehavior, since they are not given the status of the other, higher class. The “mongrels” of society are neither expected nor welcome to rise to the occasion, but the gentry are blooded to perform a particular temperament. On the one hand, the lower classes have a semblance of latitude; on the other, the supposedly highest classes are straightjackets who are enchained under a prescribed arrangement of bodies where any deviation from the rules of the inner circle is countered by bodily removal: a misfortune that resulted in imprisonment, death, involuntary admission into an asylum, or social banishment.

Selective animal breeding for pleasure was a way to reify Victorian gender roles and the ancestral elite. As the city became the center of British culture, sporting gundogs of the country manor followed their stately owners into the confined and buzzing spaces of civic parks, museums, and parliament buildings. In *The Animal Estate*, Harriet Ritvo explains that the social elite sought to moderate dog breeding which subsequently reinforced their own social position

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<sup>49</sup> Gordon Stables, “Breeding and Rearing for Pleasure, Prizes and Profit,” *The Dog Owners’ Annual for 1896* (London: Dean and Son, 1896), p.166.

apart from the nouveau riche.<sup>50</sup> Working dogs had always been part of the English landscape, but it was the pet dog that was an indulgence of the upper classes. So loved amongst the British royalty, the purebred became a luxury item.<sup>51</sup> At the fin-de-siècle, a particularly distinguished breed could be purchased for a small fortune, revealing more about the status of the owner than that of the dog. In order to separate the sporting dog from the pet, or rather, the country dog fancier from the urban pet fancier, The Kennel Club of England was created in 1873.<sup>52</sup> The role of the Kennel Club was to act as a governing body by setting rigid standards of breeding and pedigree that at the beginning separated middle-class fanciers from the gentry by instituting field trials and urban dog shows, thereby separating dogs based on working ability from dogs bred for show.<sup>53</sup> The classification of dogs allowed for groups to be separated along the lines practicality versus mere beauty or companionability, reproducing the separation between working class bodies and the idle rich. Embodying the characteristics of their handlers, the differentiation between canine and master became indistinguishable; in many cases, ribbons awarded to the “best in show” had more to do with the owner’s lineage than the dog itself.<sup>54</sup> In many ways, dog fancying replaced the pageantry of the landed gentry with the spectacle of the “blue blood”

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<sup>50</sup> Ritvo 84.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>52</sup> Edward William Jaquet. *The Kennel Club: A History and a Record of its Work*, London: The New York Kennel Gazette, 1905. Original Print: New York Public Library, 1945.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 3.

The introduction to the Kennel Club history is comparable to a political manifesto: “ ‘The History of the Kennel Club’ speaks for itself, and narrates the story of the conception, growth and evolution of the body politic, which has served as the government in all matters pertaining to dogs [...] Perfection may not yet have been attained; but speaking from a not inconsiderable experience, I can safely assert that those who have exercised a ruling influence in the canine affairs have striven to attain it.”

<sup>54</sup> Edward Jaquet prioritized the details of wealth and lineage of the dog breeder over the dogs themselves in his 1905 published history and record of the early days of the Kennel Club, lending no script to dog owners of the middling class. In its nascent years, Edward William Jaquet documented the formation of the Kennel Club in a nearly five hundred-page sprawl of dog fanciers, in what at times reads as sanctioned chin-wagging over less noble-bodied canine enthusiasts. The *British Fancier Annual Review*, the *Kennel Review*, and the *Ladies’ Kennel Review* notably featured photograph of dogs and their aristocratic owners, often arranging the pages according to rank and status (Ritvo 89). Despite the increasing popularity of dog shows, it is no surprise that middle-class fanciers rarely won. In fact, the status of the dog was so wrapped up in the status of the owner that “vulgar associations could preclude a breed’s acceptance in genteel circles” (Ritvo 90).



companion animal; animals that were once part of the country estate and subsequently turned into lap dogs to match their new surroundings in London proper.

Like the tomes of Debrett's *The Peerage*—originally a London publication that has documented short histories of the titled English gentry since the turn of the eighteenth century—sporting and gaming organizations like the Kennel Club provided the modern upstart a way to duplicate this aristocratic heritage. Breeding and showing dogs was a way to actively engage with symbols of power as the canine body inherited magisterial histories from around the world. In an era that came to include a waning class of patricians and the emergent business classes, the Kennel Club epitomized the English interest in mapping noble genealogies along with the tactic breeding of canines, reaching a feverish pitch by the early twentieth century.<sup>55</sup>

## WOOLF'S WORK IN CONTEXT

Virginia Woolf's study of the leisure class comes full circle in her satirical biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog in the novel *Flush* (1933) where she projects aristocratic status and identity onto the body of an animal.<sup>56</sup> In the novel, Woolf draws on the concepts of canine

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<sup>55</sup> The most landed and wealthy of sportsmen were featured in the popular "gentleman's newspaper" called *The Field*. Charles Dickens was one of the first readers of *The Field* upon its inception in 1853. The journal describes itself as being "founded for those who loved shooting, fishing, hunting and could sniff out a decent claret at 1,000 paces." (Read more at <http://www.thefield.co.uk>). Canine companions had long been celebrated in renaissance art and popularized in the Victorian era with the pedigree more often straying from the sporting variety toward the "sleeve" dog preferred by aristocratic women in the modern era. Virginia Woolf would have had prodigious exposure to Victorian portraiture, as the lauded British Museum is located within the Bloomsbury district. Moreover, Woolf's sister Vanessa Bell was an artist and her son, Quentin Bell was an art historian who would go on to write several books on the Bloomsbury Group. Quentin Bell wrote Virginia Woolf's biography, published in 1972; his memoir entitled *Bloomsbury Recalled* was published the year of his death in 1996.

<sup>56</sup> Philip Kelley and Scott Lewis, eds., vol.9. *The Brownings' Correspondence*. Waco, Tex.: Wedgestone Press. 1984-87. p. 272. Sired by "a real old cocking dog" as Mary Mitford's father describes him, Flush was given as a gift by Miss Mitford to the convalescent Miss Barrett where he featured prominently in much of their letter correspondence (Beauman, Sally. Introduction. *Flush: A Biography*. By Virginia Woolf. 1933. London: Persephone Books, 2011. vi-vii. Print).

society by illuminating the universality of Kennel Club laws within English culture.<sup>57</sup> She would go on to write Flush's biography, inspired by the epistolary relationship between writers Mary Russell Mitford and Elizabeth Barrett Browning in the late 1830s. All three women were successful writers, but there is no doubt that Woolf saw some of herself in Elizabeth Barrett as she was periodically shut away in her rooms, either to grieve the untimely death of her brother, to cater to an overbearing father, or out of personal illness. In Elizabeth Barrett's journal, she makes a pointed remark that plays out in Woolf's work: an observation that women are subordinated to power as is a dog to a master, a relationship that offers no alternative power structure. When Elizabeth Barrett regards her dog Flush by her side she questions, "Why, what is Flush, but a lapdog? And what am I, but a woman? I assure you we never take ourselves for anything greater."<sup>58</sup> The suggestion here is that women are prohibited from rising above their gendered station. This question of autonomy is foregrounded in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando* by aligning pack behavior with human in-group formations, in that every member of society is beholden to a specific purpose within a social hierarchy.

In other works, Woolf similarly interrogates notions of class through canine embodiment. Conjecture about the "mongrel" dog versus the pedigreed canine plays out explicitly in Virginia Woolf's undated and unfinished sketch called "The Dog" where a female stray becomes attached and dependent on her uncaring male human master. Although the work is incomplete and fragmented, Woolf is clearly playing with the concept of the master-servant relationship as it relates to man and dog, citizen to state, and women's subjugation to the dominant order.<sup>59</sup> In

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<sup>57</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933) 14.

<sup>58</sup> Philip Kelley and Scott Lewis, eds., vol.9. *The Brownings' Correspondence*. Waco, Tex.: Wedgestone Press. 1984-87. p. 272.

<sup>59</sup> *The Dog* is reprinted in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* where the editor Susan Dick, notes that although the story is undated, she places its creation sometime in the vicinity of 1939 (*Complete Shorter Fiction*, 341).

1940, Virginia Woolf sent her literary agent, Jacques Chambrun, a different tale entitled, “Gipsy, the Mongrel” but it was left unpublished. The story follows the life of a female stray who is spared from euthanasia when her foster father, Tom Bagot, decides that he “couldn’t drown a puppy who grinned in the face of death.”<sup>60</sup> Eventually the mongrel dog wheedles her way into the hearts of the Bagots with her “remarkable character” despite having her “looks against her.” However, a wealthy acquaintance who can no longer “endure” the mongrel’s relationship with the Bagots, makes them an extravagant gift of a red setter named Hector, with a “pedigree as long as your arm.”<sup>61</sup> Although he is as mannerly as an aristocrat, Hector takes it upon himself to suddenly partake in a neighborhood romp and is subsequently dismissed from the household. The Bagots keep Gipsy the mongrel dog, but she runs away out of her own volition. In this anecdote, Woolf stresses the precarious favor of influential circles: For the mongrel dog, bad behavior is expected and amusing, but for the pedigreed body incivility is met with banishment. Thus, Woolf’s London metropolis posits that one cannot be merely born into the privileged class, they must also invariably maneuver their delicate social positioning, thereby becoming an object of mannerly diligence. This story bears mentioning because it is written much later than her larger pieces, and thus it is conceivable that she was attempting to construct a lens through which to understand the more subversive elements of her earlier works.

Animals are scattered throughout the breadth of Woolf’s work, but dogs in particular are the central animal in considerations and comparisons of human culture to animal culture. Written sometime in the early 1920s, the experimental short story “The Evening Party” shares similarities with *Mrs. Dalloway* as it follows the social interaction of an uppity gathering in

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<sup>60</sup> *The Complete Shorter Fiction* 273.

<sup>61</sup> *Complete Shorter Fiction* 275

central London.<sup>62</sup> “The Evening Party” follows the narrative view of various disembodied guests identified only by their honorific “Professor” or “Madam.”<sup>63</sup> Written strictly in streams of consciousness that shift between open achromatic dialogue and interior monologues, the sensibilities of the partygoers are revisited in *Mrs. Dalloway* in the way that Woolf’s characters are written with disparate internal and external distinctions. “The Evening Party” concludes with a biting dog interrupting the party, wherein the narrator unmoors from the group, and drifts away on inscrutable waves.<sup>64</sup> The biting dog is more than an interruption that so embodies postwar modernist fiction where violence and shocks are assimilated into daily life. These interruptions are indeed a centripetal objection to rigid social performances. Georg Simmel who argues that it is “through such upheavals that the more conservative mind [can] accommodate to the metropolitan rhythm of events,”<sup>65</sup> the dog bite is a literary gesture signaling an eruption of the subjugated spirit that is subdued in spaces occupied by the elite, a reminder that these are occasions for social positioning and despotism.

Micro-social exchanges between the human and animal are also manifested in Woolf’s portrayals of macro-social institutions of the British Empire. Public entertainment created a distance between the British masses who consumed the spoils of the Empire, cementing the gap between social groups. The nineteenth and early twentieth century British public zoos were a testimony to modern colonial power. Animal exhibitions were made to look like progress but categorically performed and maintained a patrician hierarchy in which the lower classes could

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<sup>62</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *The Complete Short Stories*. Ed. Susan Dick. p.298.

<sup>63</sup> *Complete Shorter Fiction* 100.

<sup>64</sup> I use the term “waves” as analogous to Woolf’s *The Waves* (1933) because the narrative structure of cacophonous and indistinguishable shifts between interior/exterior monologues are practiced in “The Evening Party” and reinscribed later in *The Waves* as well as much of her other work. “The Evening Party” ends on figurative waves as the focalized consciousness declares: “Away. The moon is dark upon the moor. Away, we’ll breast them, those waves of darkness crested by the trees, rising for ever, lonely and dark. The lights rise and fall; the water’s thin as air; the moon’s behind it. D’you sink? D’you see the islands? Alone with me.” (*Complete Shorter Fiction*, 100).

<sup>65</sup> Simmel, Georg. “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” *The City Cultures Reader*. Ed. Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall, and Iain Borden. London: Routledge, 2000. p. 13.

participate in bourgeois amusement. English art critic and novelist John Berger claims, “the capturing of animals was a symbolic representation of the conquest of all distant and exotic lands.”<sup>66</sup> Woolf was fascinated with the subversive performances of the old imperialist regime as they symbolically appeared within the public zoos and the military and animal exhibitions. She plays on this trope in her essay “Thunder at Wembley” wherein she deconstructs the menagerie in the Empire Exhibition of 1924. Her notebooks for *Mrs. Dalloway* were fragmented with excerpts of “Thunder at Wembley” and “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” all of which explore the spectacle of empire through the representations of the menagerie.<sup>67</sup> In as much as British imperialism was reenacted in its zoological gardens with its baboons, elephants, and tigers as symbolic of colonial supremacy, the growing popularity of dog shows was a way to produce and reinforce boundaries between social classes in the modern era.

## SCHOLARLY MUSINGS

The bulk of criticism focusing on non-human animals in the works of Virginia Woolf relies most heavily on her satirical, dog-as-aristocracy biography entitled *Flush* (1933). Scholars generally magnify Woolf’s interrogation of an anthropocentric attitude towards birds, beasts, and bugs in works where the human is more obviously decentered, such as in Woolf’s posthumously published short story “The Widow and the Parrot: A True Story”(1985), the short story, “Kew

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<sup>66</sup> John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 21.

<sup>67</sup> Kurt Koenigsberger, *The Novel and the Menagerie: Totality, Englishness, and Empire* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio University Press, 2007), 160. In “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” the animal menagerie is briefly used to make a comparison between humans and animals in order to draw out the problem of writing the “reality of characters.” Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” eds. Micheal J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy. *Essentials in Literary Fiction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996. pg. 36.

Gardens” (1919), and her essay, “The Death of the Moth” (1942).<sup>68</sup> Bonnie Kime Scott conducts a sprawling investigation into the animal symbolism throughout Woolf’s more popular works. While Scott engages with “doggie” moments and agrees, “Woolf uses animals politically to comment upon inequities of class, gender, nation, and perhaps even race,” she skips over these problems within Woolf’s writing outside of *Flush*. Instead, Scott presupposes Woolf’s dogs in *Mrs. Dalloway* “as the companions of young women [who] work as palliatives for disaffected lives.”<sup>69</sup> This observation is a partial glimpse of the “coevolution, with the mutual receptivity between woman and dog” that she more thoroughly explores in *Flush*. While Scott builds on her argument with the help of Ritvo, Derrida, Deleuze, and Agamben, she hesitates to corner Woolf’s dogs as the central animal in Woolf’s considerations of human culture. Likewise, Wendy Faris argues that animals have no major role in Woolf’s work and that they are best “articulated under the sign of the androgynous mind rather than of the heterosexual beast.”<sup>70</sup> In her article “Bloomsbury’s Beasts,” Faris contends that the use of birds in *Mrs. Dalloway* symbolizes the “abject” and “unstable elements of the self” that are repressed in order to “gain a stable identity.”<sup>71</sup> While one might agree with her argument that non-human animals have no fixed identity, and that identity categories are a human invention, she does not get beyond her claim that Woolf’s animals “serve both as outlets for repressed emotions and vehicles to express cosmic relatedness.”<sup>72</sup> Although Faris interrogates the human/dog boundary, she sidesteps crystallizing its fundamental importance in Woolf’s work. Like Bonnie Kime Scott’s proposal

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<sup>68</sup> While not an exhaustive list of scholarly work on Woolf’s animal bodies, Donna Haraway alludes to *A Room of One’s Own* in her book *The Companion Species Manifesto*, as does Jane Goldman in her essay “The Dogs That Therefore Woolf Follows: Some Canine Sources for *A Room of One’s Own* in Nature and Art,” from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf. Derek Ryan examines all of the above-mentioned works in his monograph, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*.

<sup>69</sup> Scott, Bonnie Kime. “Crossing the Species Barrier.” *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia, 2012. 154-92.

<sup>70</sup> Faris, 107.

<sup>71</sup> Wendy B. Faris, “Bloomsbury’s Beast,” 110.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

that dogs are representative of repressed agency in *Dalloway*, Faris too relegates the animal as human placator, rather than dogs working parallel to the human. Woolf used the taxonomic tradition as a reflection of erroneous typecasting because desire, sexuality, ability, and intelligence (among many other things) skirt fixity. The coevolution between humans and the domestic dog reveal human social networks that push and pull at the animal boundary. Likewise, Vicki Tromanhauser considers the hierarchal structures embedded within Woolf's humans and their animal analogues in *Mrs. Dalloway*. However, Tromanhauser attributes several animal species to singular characters in such a way that drifts from how hierarchies work, instead pitting *Dalloway* characters as either being human or animal, rather than functioning as the same thing.<sup>73</sup> While the above scholarship generally agrees that Woolf was looking "to criticize the social system," and all recognize that she uses nonhuman animals as human surrogates, no one as of yet has considered how precisely dog fancying inspired Woolf to actualize her human subjects.<sup>74</sup>

Canine animality puts forth the idea that Woolf's characters are servants of and submissive to a master or higher authority; an authority that obliges its subjects to adhere to social and gender codes written on the body. Pamela Caughie taps into the parallels between dog and domestic servant in Woolf's *Flush*, asserting that Woolf used canine animality as a personal refusal to identify with servants, claiming that it is a way to "remain distant" for a modernist

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<sup>73</sup> Tromanhauser, "Mrs. Dalloway's Animals and the Humanist Laboratory," p. 197.

<sup>74</sup> Woolf, *Diary*, p. 248. The Kennel Club has been discussed as a source of inspiration for Woolf's eponymous hero in *Flush*. For example, Anna Snaith discusses breeding and fascism in her article "Of Fanciers, Footnotes, and Fascism: Virginia Woolf's *Flush*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 48.3 (2002) 614-636. Karalyn Kendall-Morwick examines how Woolf uses the bildungsroman in *Flush* in order to interrogate "human-authored breed standards" and the phallogocentric literary canon in her article "Mongrel Fiction: Canine Bildung and the Feminist Critique of Anthropocentrism in Woolf's *Flush*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 60.3 (2014)506-26.

author who was “insensitiv[e] to servants.”<sup>75</sup> While one might argue that Woolf often left her domestic servants in the margins, one could better contend that her use of canine animality is movable and operates in concurrence with approximate hierarchies, troping on the concept of the “great chain of being” where kings and nobles are closer to God, and women are legitimized through marriage—a twin to the domestic animal.<sup>76</sup> This would invariably leave “servants” in the animal realm without the capability to markedly communicate with whatever Woolf foregrounds as the ascendant society.

The most substantive examinations of Woolf’s canine metaphors are attributed to Jane Goldman who, for example, argues that the narrator of *A Room of One’s Own* is a “dog-woman,” drawing attention to how canine qualities are bound up in Woolf’s unstable subjectivities.<sup>77</sup> Goldman’s “dog-woman” is, in her own words, a “woman who seems to inhabit a canine morphology or one who seems to haunt the margins between human subjectivity and canid animality or one who is used to being treated or figured as a dog.”<sup>78</sup> Goldman reads canine similes, imagery, and Woolf’s use of “rippling syntax” as an authorial intent to politicize gender by aligning “woman” with what is neither quite human nor sovereign.<sup>79</sup> She is presently at work at her new book, *Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog*, framing her analyses through the philosophies of Giorgio Agamben (*The Open*), Donna Haraway (*Where Species Meet*, and *The*

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<sup>75</sup> Caughie, “Dogs and Servants,” 38. While I cannot disagree with Caughie’s analysis of *Flush*, I find that her claim of Woolf’s insensitivity to servants to be debatable, as Woolf was rather critical of many people, including Vita Sackville-West before they were lovers. Quentin Bell, Woolf’s nephew and biographer, as well as Leonard Woolf, were quick to refer to Woolf as “cold” and “abnormal.” However, Viviane Forrester writes quite a different portrait of Virginia Woolf, drawing on Woolf’s diaries, memoirs, novels, letters, and essays in order to reveal a more authentic representation of the author. One needs only to read Virginia Woolf’s letters to see that she was an extraordinarily loving and passionate person to those who earned and deserved it. Forrester implicates the men (and would-be biographers) in Woolf’s life as people who disparaged and used Woolf for their own purposes. See more: Viviane Forrester. *Virginia Woolf: A Portrait*. Trans. Jody Gladding. New York: Columbia UP, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Figgis. *The Theory of the Divine Right of Kings*, 148.

<sup>77</sup> Jane Goldman, “Ce Chien Est À Moi,” p. 49.

<sup>78</sup> Goldman, “‘When Dogs Will Become Men’: *Melancholia*, Canine Allegories, and Theriocephalous Figures in Woolf’s Urban Contact Zones,” *Woolf and the City: Selected Papers of the Nineteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, eds. Elizabeth F. Evans and Sarah E. Cornish, pp. 180.

<sup>79</sup> Goldman, “Crusoe’s Dog(s): Woolf and Derrida,” 475-6.



*Companion Species Manifesto*), Henry Louis Gates Jr. (*The Signifying Monkey*), and others. In her essay, “When Dogs Will Become Men,” Goldman uses Agamben’s *The Open* to “think about the signifying dog,” particularly a dog-headed lamb that appears in Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, as well as the wolf’s head colophon for the Hogarth Press. Thereafter, she looks at the symbology of the animal head in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Years* as possible representations of theriocephalus archons. If there is one thing we can agree upon, it is that there is continuity between human and animal in Woolf’s work, and that canine morphology refigures human subjectivity in sociopolitical contact zones.

## METHODOLOGY

Dogs have a crucial place in articulating ideas about class and sexuality in Woolf and her milieu. Her works move from considering dogs as representative instruments of class and gender in *Mrs. Dalloway*, to thinking more complexly about the dog/human boundary in *Orlando*. Human-to-animal ontologies are an evaluation of human biopolitical affiliations, where human social categories and function are embedded and reflected in canine behavior. The “anthropological machine” and the fabulated nature of the human world is exposed in contact zones associated with problems of sexuality, class, and gender, as these internal and external distinctions are able to evade human social typologies, especially in relation to the political and cultural metamorphosis of the interwar period. By identifying how canine signifiers operate, human-making ontologies are better understood. Woolf’s dogs are best articulated through Carrie Rohman’s study in *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*, where she makes the claim that modernist texts attempt to solve the “species problem” by placing animality onto the

disenfranchised “other.”<sup>80</sup> Social Darwinistic links between human and animal are conflated with women, homosexual desire, and lower class bodies as they exist under the imperialist chain-of-being where British men of the sophisticated elite are the superior species, and all others fall somewhere underneath. Rohman suggests that the value of an individual is reflected by the proximity or distance of the irrational, instinctual animal; the furthest distance away from animality constitutes an individual’s socio-cultural progress or supremacy.<sup>81</sup> In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the proximity of animal signifiers supports Rohman’s rationale of human hierarchies, however Woolf appropriates dog fancy in order to allegorize the similarities between dog breed groups and human social functionality, thus reorienting the dog as functioning as an illimitable condition hidden by human signifiers. In *Orlando*, Woolf skirts erroneous human categories, instead relying on the natural history of the dog in order to articulate lesbian desire. Both novels use canine embodiment in order to reconcile the complications of human cultural production and the affects of structural power.

I have positioned my analyses of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando* through the theoretical frameworks of Giorgio Agamben’s *The Open*, and Michel Foucault’s *biopolitics*.<sup>8283</sup> Building on Aristotle’s *politikon zōon*, which defines man as a political animal,<sup>84</sup> Michel Foucault transfers the evolution of this theory into what is called *biopolitics*, where human life conflates with State power; asserting that “man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his

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<sup>80</sup> Rohman, 30.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>82</sup> Giorgio Agamben. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Michel Foucault, Senellart M, Collège de France. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. New York; Basingstoke [England]; Palgrave Macmillan; 2008.

<sup>84</sup> *Politics*, 1253a, 4.

existence as a living being into question.”<sup>85</sup> Giorgio Agamben subsequently builds on these philosophical concepts, arguing that man is a historical production that is assigned by language.<sup>86</sup> He suggests that “man” originates from an Anthropomorph or animal-man, a category that is recognizably animal yet indeterminately human. Instead of presupposing the human, Agamben argues that it is the “anthropological machine” that produces man by means of exclusion. Yet, it is in this exclusion where man becomes animal, that is, “the animal [is] separated within the human body itself.”<sup>87</sup> The anthropological machine works by adorning the animal in human qualities, but in order for the machine to perpetuate itself, it must exclude bodies by dehumanizing or animalizing the human. I contend that Woolf categorically uses animals—especially the dog—as an embodiment of the marginalized figure who is incompatible with predominant sociocultural prescripts. Animality is not an earmark of the “other,” rather it is more often revealed when compulsions of the State are at work on unstable human categories. Woolf uses animals (specifically dogs) because they are a natural proxy to human social structural functionalism. Dogs are fundamentally expressive despite their willingness to please a master; moreover, dogs do not control their desires or physicality as that is generally imposed upon them. Animal selfhood is not easily discoverable or evident, and is thus punished or ignored; they are queered by the perpetually human-driven insistence that they unnaturally accommodate a world exploited by human interest. In *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando*, animality is foregrounded where the boundaries between human and animal collapse, and it is under this weight of

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<sup>85</sup> *La volonté* 188.

<sup>86</sup> Agamben 36.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

ensorship-by-way-of-animal where nonhuman taxonomies interpolate and correspond with human social hierarchies.<sup>88</sup>

Chapter I examines the institutionalization of dog fancy and dog behavior as representative of concomitant roles within a human social system. Virginia Woolf draws on the history and structure of the Kennel Club as an allegory of the taxonomy of characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* by sketching an association between the rigidity of urban dog fancy with the redundancy of the bourgeoisie. However, the Victorians underwent a cultural shift that removed power from the hereditary class, leaving them to perform obsolete roles into the Edwardian era. The admission of new breeds within the Kennel Club mirrors the anxiety over changing social dynamics as capitalistic triumphs gained supremacy over the pedigreed gentry. The crux of the human and animal relationship is analogous: dogs are not entirely dissimilar, nor do they completely inhabit a separate sphere from that of their human counterpart, rather, the subjectivity of Woolf's marginalized characters are read through the body of a dog. Their draw towards solidarity within these kinship groups obliges characters to carry out a specific duty, with the aim of pleasing the dominant body in as much as dog will please its master. Moreover, conflicts arise as naturally as infighting occurs when an outsider attempts to join the inner circle. Inasmuch as dogs of comparable status may fight for ascendancy, the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* are constantly aware of their precarious social position. Woolf does not write her way out of the problem of strict social hierarchies. Instead, she concedes that humans, like dogs, will perpetually engage with pack dynamics with only its members changing. Her characters are then

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<sup>88</sup> This concept has been thoroughly analyzed in the seminal work by Harriet Ritvo, who lays the groundwork within the Victorian vision of the zoo as symbolic of British Imperialism, and makes similar claims on domestic animal bodies—particularly horses, cattle, and dogs—as interpellations of British class and status. (Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*. Chapter on dog fancying, “Prize Pets,” 82; Chapter on zoo menagerie, “Exotic Captive,” 205; Chapter on Cattle, “Barons of Beef,” 45; Chapter on Horses, “The Nature of the Beast,” 19).

faced with the possibility of either dying or conceding to new members who are bred to perform for the new era.

Chapter II investigates canine materiality in *Orlando* as a reconnaissance of power structures, as well as same-sex desire. Canine embodiment allegorizes the political domination of gender, sexuality, and class, and by cross-dressing Orlando as a dog-man-woman, Woolf is able to censor nature and desire, conjointly challenging hegemonic concepts of “the essence of reality.”<sup>89</sup> Woolf employs a queered canine animism in order to raise questions about what is a considerably flawed system of categorization. By tying in elements of associated cultural paradigms as well as biographical elements, I argue that *Orlando* is a politically progressive novel, doing the work of Vita Sackville-West’s conviction that “such connections [same-sex relationships] will to a very large extent cease to be regarded as merely unnatural, and will be understood far better, . . . it will be recognized that many more people of my type do exist than under the present-day system of hypocrisy.”<sup>90</sup> Woolf is actively pushing beyond the empirical knowledge of an archaic taxonomical system in order to get closer to understanding “natural” desire, which as it turns out, is an empty distinction.

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<sup>89</sup> Woolf, *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf*, 3: 113.

<sup>90</sup> This appears in Vita’s unpublished account of her love affair with Violet Trefusis, reprinted as part III of Nigel Nicolson’s *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973; London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), pp.101-2.

“HER POOR DOG WAS HOWLING”: ANIMALITY AND PEDIGREE IN *MRS. DALLOWAY*

Septimus Smith’s hallucinatory fear in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) of future scientific endeavors “when dogs will become men”<sup>91</sup> could be read as Woolf’s anxiety about the possibility (and inevitability) of another World War, and the collapse of human consciousness into animal violence and carnality.<sup>92</sup> However, I argue that Woolf deliberately links humans with canines to reveal human social and cultural behaviors, doing so through an exploration of canine embodiment. The novel expresses anxieties about shifting national and community dynamics through its canine references, raising questions of power associated with gender, sexuality, and class. Woolf uses canine animality in order to expose biopolitical control in the modern era by drawing parallels between dog fancying and human community formation. This chapter examines the materiality of canine bodies and how these references convey human sociocultural constructs in *Mrs. Dalloway*. By drawing on the history and structure of the Kennel Club as an allegory of the taxonomy of her characters, Woolf toggles the human perspective with the animal body in order to disentangle and consider the inhumane realities of “human-making” social networks within the novel.

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<sup>91</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. p. 74.

<sup>92</sup> Scholars Gillian Beer (*Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*), Michele Pridmore-Brown (“Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism”), and Alex Zwerdling (*Virginia Woolf and the Real World*) attribute the unfinished conclusion of Woolf’s novel, *Between the Acts* (1941) as an allusion to the end of civilization through Woolf’s use of nonhuman animality as allegorical to the Olivers’ lineage. Thus, there seems to be a pattern of world-ending nihilism through some of Woolf’s other works.

Woolf references dog behavior and breed groups as totems of the structural functionalism within human social groups.<sup>93</sup>

Shifting narrative perspective ever so slightly in *Mrs. Dalloway* is what Caroline Hovanec refers to as Woolf's "signature modernist techniques" of defamiliarization.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, in an era that sought to reexamine human realities, Woolf uses animal perspectives in order to contemplate the human tableau and its systems of control. Hovanec indicates Woolf's "imagined animals as *knowing* beasts, and this animal knowledge revealed the contingency and limitations of the knowing human subject."<sup>95</sup> The vantage point of the animal perspective pays close attention to "the zoological specificity of the creature,"<sup>96</sup> which in turn reveals materialities that are not of the animal world, but of the human one. Working within this framework, Woolf uses dog fancy to replicate the spectacle of human societies (especially in the Victorian era) in the way that both kinship systems are organized under a dominant structure with various subsets working together to make up a cohesive system. Human culture and dog culture generally arrange procreation by class or breed in order to reproduce specific behaviors and appearances. For example, a herding dog is deliberately bred according to physical traits and subsequently socialized to the role of shepherding livestock in much the same way as the Dalloways marry into a shared class and perform the collaborative role of maintaining a boundary around their high society friends.

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<sup>93</sup> "Structural functionalism" is a theory that puts forth the idea that a social system survives by adhering to an organized structure. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf's characters conform to their assigned social function. Émile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer popularized theories of Structural Functionalism within a framework that suggests societies are held together by a system of exchanges between segmented groups who share the same belief system. For more information, see Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), and Spencer's *The Principles of Sociology*, 3 vols. (1898).

<sup>94</sup> Caroline Hovanec. "Philosophical Barnacles and Empiricist Dogs: Knowing Animals in Modernist Literature and Science." *Configurations*, 21.3 (2013), 257.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 250. Hovanec distinguishes Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall" (1917), "Kew Gardens" (1919), and *Flush* (1933) as her points of reference.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 257.

The continuation of a social system depends on its individuals to perform a specific role. However, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, capitalism is quickly interceding with residual elements of the Victorian social system, a transaction that interpolates the opening scene of an aeroplane “bor[ing] ominously into the ears of the crowd” wherein aerial messages are dissimilarly interpreted by the people in the streets.<sup>97</sup> This particular *mise-en-scène* suggests that this cultural transition is happening quickly, aggressively, and has fragmented a unified, human-centric perspective. In Woolf’s first act, she unravels the human epistemological understanding of the world, projecting interior human anxieties in streams of consciousness in order to demonstrate that her characters are functioning within a precarious “human-making” social network. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, canine references signify disentanglement with a “human” veneer, which in turn reveals a human social structure that subsists on domination, exclusion, and static social performativity. Woolf’s characters work to recognizably elevate themselves above the status of the animal; a signifier more often revealed when that character is a homosexual, a foreigner, of the lower classes, or of a different race or religion. In the process of articulating “human” distinctions as conscripted and constantly on the verge of dissolution, Woolf reveals a world of dogs nipping at the heels of human relevance. Appropriately, a social system shifts under major duress, thus the tension driving the narrative of *Mrs. Dalloway* is over the collapse of the antiquated Victorian/Edwardian system that had maintained human distinctions of Woolf’s older characters. The various human sociocultural divisions that appear in *Mrs. Dalloway* mirror dog breed groups in their purposes of preserving the Victorian structure, however because of the major cultural trends and changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the performances of these roles were no longer necessary nor welcome in postwar Britain. Thus,

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<sup>97</sup> *Mrs. Dalloway* 20.



Woolf “crossbreeds” her humans with canine ecologies in order to satirize the internal tensions of the ruling class who have become a menagerie of bygone viability.

The culminating party at the Westminster home of the eponymous Mrs. Dalloway embodies the crowning moment of animal bodies-on-display. Partygoers preserve kinship associations and status by supervising and judging the behavior of others within their small social circle while at the same time performing what Georg Simmel would call an “unambiguous image of himself in the eyes of the other” in order to negotiate an objective, metropolitan life.<sup>98</sup> Woolf cultivates her marginalized characters by using canine bodies as Socratic *daimons* signifying (most importantly) class, but also as animal doppelgangers who are obedient to a master, completely dependent on a system that prohibits individual autonomy.<sup>99</sup> Animals often serve as stand-ins for rampant or queer sexuality as “deviant” sexuality conflicts with dominant ideologies.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Septimus Smith’s recollection of his homoerotic romp with Evans is told through the tableau of terrier dogs, not merely in the interest of literary censorship, but because animality emerges in acts of transgression; the animal materializes from behind the idealized version of rationality. I extend this speculation by arguing that dog types are of importance in *Mrs. Dalloway* because they are agents that sublimate class and social positioning against the “gamekeepers” of British society.

Alliterations of power are invested in peripheral impressions of Queen Victoria, as she (historically) acts out parallel forms of oblique power related to the character of Lady Bruton. Fettered by her female body, Victoria often arranged political maneuvering through the

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<sup>98</sup> Simmel, Georg. “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” *The City Cultures Reader*. Ed. Malcolm Miles, Tim Hall, and Ian Borden. London: Routledge, 2000. pg. 18.

<sup>99</sup> For Plato, a daimon is a spiritual being who is commensurate with the higher self. See More: Pierre Destrée, “The “Daimonion” and the Philosophical Mission — Should the Divine Sign Remain Unique to Socrates?”, *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 38(2), 2005, p. 63-79.

<sup>100</sup> Mel Chen. Introduction. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering and Queer Affect*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2012. 9.

assistance of her husband, Prince Albert. After his death, she was forced to organize the services of noblemen to do her bidding, and without much success. Instead, she turned her imperial efforts towards the regulation of behavior, gender, and class. As a staunch dissenter of Women's Suffrage, Queen Victoria's cruel sentiments on the emancipation of women are reflected in Lady Bruton's indolent political decision, "it may be Emigration, it may be Emancipation" (109).<sup>101</sup> Thus, Lady Bruton's dismissal of women within the world of the novel becomes more transparent: if a woman is to have sovereignty, she can be the only one. Nonetheless, Lady Bruton is caught up in networks of power that oblige her to exclude bodies in recompense for an ascendant social position. Indeed, Lady Bruton's politics closely resemble Queen Victoria's—especially in her establishment of Canadian orphanages. Like the good doctor, Sir William Bradshaw, Lady Bruton eliminates bodies that do not effectively work within the social institution as, "emigration had become, in short, largely Lady Bruton" (109). Without the possibility of ever marching along battles lines, Lady Bruton turns to extraditing orphaned children from England's border, confining, exiling, and condemning children to a life in Canada—essentially deposing all that is abject to the prudish noble classes.

Queen Victoria was known for her menagerie of pets, including a woolly Chow Chow, a pet that was given to her in 1865 and subsequently popularized in England among the nobility.<sup>102</sup> As Peter Walsh walks to Regent's Park after his visit with Clarissa Dalloway, he ruminates about

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<sup>101</sup> Strachey, Lytton, 1880-1932. *Queen Victoria*. N.p.: Project Gutenberg, 2006.

"In 1870, her eye having fallen upon the report of a meeting in favour of Women's Suffrage, she wrote to Mr. Martin in royal rage—"The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of 'Woman's Rights,' with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety. Lady—ought to get a GOOD WHIPPING. It is a subject which makes the Queen so furious that she cannot contain herself. God created men and women different—then let them remain each in their own position. Tennyson has some beautiful lines on the difference of men and women in 'The Princess.' Woman would become the most hateful, heartless, and disgusting of human beings were she allowed to unsex herself; and where would be the protection which man was intended to give the weaker sex? The Queen is sure that Mrs. Martin agrees with her."

<sup>102</sup> Lytton Strachey. *Queen Victoria, 1880-1932*. N.p.

English civilization, “butlers; chow dog; girls in their security” (55), thus the Chow—with Peter’s corroboration—is associated with high nobility. Therefore, to position Lady Bruton in her salon where she negotiates politics with her “chow stretched behind her” (111), the particular breed forms a link to nobility. Commonly referred to as an “ancient dog breed,” the Chow is the trans-species connection between the Victorian regime and Lady Bruton as she is labeled by the collective consciousness as, “derived from the eighteenth century” (173). Unable to take her pet Chow wherever she went, Queen Victoria had her dressmakers create a stuffed animal in its stead.<sup>103</sup> Thus, this ancient Chow of fighting pedigree metamorphoses into a useless toy of the royal palace. The physical resemblance of Lady Bruton’s masculine profile with that of her patrilineal descendants who bear an impressive array of military honors is emblematic of an inherited body or pedigree that is bred for soldiering and the pursuit of military conquests. The paintings of her descendants show a traceable lineage wherein Lady Bruton has retained the characteristics of her breed. Richard Dalloway thinks of her as a “well-set-up old wom[a]n of pedigree” (105), thus calling attention to her good breeding; however, “well-set-up” in the sense that she is a bit of a lap dog; a dog that does not have much of a purpose other than for sitting in the lap of power. After the luncheon with Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway, Lady Bruton nods off in a stream of consciousness that reveals a time before the stratification of breed guidelines and show decorum when dog shows and rat-killing competitions took place side by side: “back to those fields down in Devonshire [...] And there were the dogs; there were the rats; there were her father and mother on the lawn under the trees” (111, 112).<sup>104</sup> The sequence of images places Lady Bruton’s childhood as one of privilege and situate her as one who has set the precedent for the superficial order of class boundaries as it lingers in modernity. The recollection

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<sup>103</sup> Charlotte Wilcox. *The Chow Chow*. (Mankato, Minn: Capstone Press, 1999) 7-8.

<sup>104</sup> Daziel. *British Dogs: Describing the History, Characteristics, Points, and Club Standards of Various Breeds of Dogs Established in Great Britain*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 2. (London: L. Upcott Gill, 1889), 172-173.

of the country estate captures the history of the aristocracy and its movement into the city center – the most respectable pedigrees are the bloodlines that can be traced to the old estate.

Lady Bruton is a woman who is seated in a position of power, and unlike the other women in the world of the narrative, she has successfully engaged in political maneuvering, albeit through the assistance of men of lesser standing. Her manipulation of Hugh Whitbread into composing her letters to the *Times*—dictation that does not resemble an original or inspired discourse of her own—suggests that she is inept as a public or political figure. She is merely a figurehead of power. Virginia Woolf identified the aristocracy as “seldom [having] written at all, and...never...about themselves,” believing that the “English aristocracy [would] pass out of existence, or be merged with the common people, without leaving any true picture of themselves behind.”<sup>105</sup> In the world of the novel, Woolf portrays the aristocracy as people who are concerned with power and status, lacking personal depth and incapable of accommodating or evolving with the new establishment. Lady Bruton wants to harness England’s power for her own uses, but it is an “isle of men.”<sup>106</sup> She can only reenact the tasks of her ancestral breed because “if ever a woman could have worn the helmet and shot the arrow, could have led troops to attack, ruled with indomitable justice barbarian hordes and lain under a shield noseless in a church, or made a green grass mound on some primeval hillside, that woman was Millicent Bruton” (180). Possessing only the pretense of political power, Lady Bruton rides on the vestiges of her status, uselessly barking opinion pieces in local newspapers. She is a show dog performing for the crowd as an impotent spectacle of authority like the noble Chow couching behind her.

The other characters fall consecutively underneath Lady Bruton to perform their part within the human-canine kinship group. Below Lady Bruton’s animal marker as alpha female,

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<sup>105</sup> Virginia Woolf, “The Niece of Earl,” in *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life. Selected Essays*, vol. II, edited by Rachel Bowlby (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 94.

<sup>106</sup> *Mrs. Dalloway* 180.

Clarissa maintains the boundary surrounding the pedigreed bodies. Recalling the country estate at Bourton, Peter envisions a moment when the younger Clarissa insults a housemaid for marrying above her social class, where Clarissa subsequently declares that she will cut ties with the woman, effectively steering woman out of the pedigreed group. Through their psychical link, Peter admonishes Clarissa, wherein she finds solace in her “shaggy dog which ran after sheep” (60). Clarissa’s spoken cruelty on the housemaid-turned-Squire’s wife marks her initiation into the old regime of social correction and the policing of blooded lines. Sheltering herself with her sheepdog demonstrates that Clarissa is conscious that she is at once choosing to identify herself with the privileged class and willing to steer out “mixed breeds,” thereby positioning herself as a dutiful servant. Peter reiterates the impetus of Clarissa’s will to inhabit the space of power and safety when he turns to her choice of husband in Richard Dalloway, as he recollects Mr. Dalloway as someone who was “his best out of doors, with horses and dogs—how good he was, for instance, when that great shaggy dog of Clarissa’s got caught in a trap and had its paw half torn off, and Clarissa turned faint and Dalloway did the whole thing; bandaged, made splints; told Clarissa not to be a fool” (75). Here, Woolf establishes a relationship between Clarissa as subservient animal, and Richard Dalloway as handler who trains Clarissa in how to be a proper dog in proximity to powers of authority. Clarissa is indoctrinated into the anthropological machine with the important task of shepherding the not quite “human” bodies from the innermost circle. Towards the conclusion of the novel, Sally Seton too marks Richard Dalloway as “a sportsman, a man who cared only for dogs.” That is to say that Richard Dalloway is the gamekeeper whose job as a government employee relies on public obedience. He is the “Overseer” who obliges Clarissa to be his “Driver,” corresponding to the relationship between farmer and sheepdog, to cattle or crowd.<sup>107</sup> Together, Richard and Clarissa Dalloway keep the

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<sup>107</sup> Within a plantation hierarchy, the Overseer is the middleman between the master and slaves. Unlike the

anthropological machine working in their business of exclusion. Richard Dalloway's performance of the noble class is arguably the most palatable, and therefore requires Clarissa to become all that is implicated with being a champion show dog: to wear the appropriate clothing, to buy the right flowers, and to mingle in "proper" social circles that incidentally does not include Sally Seton, as she is born of a lower social class despite her economically successful marriage. Thus, Clarissa has herded Sally Seton from the group of pedigreed dogs. As Sally Seton reappears uninvited to Clarissa's party towards the conclusion of the novel, touting her brood of five sons at Eton, she truly embodies the future of the modern era by literally giving birth to a new breed: the modern aristocrat made noble through capitalism.

Despite the possibilities for social fluidity beyond the aristocrat, same-sex desire as well as surreptitious movement into the higher social ranks is not permissible. Using dogs to allude to the relationship between Septimus and Evans, Woolf's treatment of the narrative affirms zoomorphism within the novel. Through a focalized narration, Septimus envisions an anthropomorphized Skye terrier that transforms into the face of a man. Incidentally, the terrier was bred to hunt vermin, to go underground and chase out pest animals for the hunter, an allusion to the trench warfare of World War I in which Septimus and his (inferable) lover and fellow officer, Evans, fought. In an exposition sequence, Septimus recollects his time in the war:

[H]e developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug; one worrying a paper screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old

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Overseer, the Driver was part of the slave community but esteemed by the master. This analogy exposes Clarissa's role as servant or slave, but one that is favored by the predominant authority, which in this case is Lady Bruton. ("Overseer and Driver." *Dictionary of American History. Encyclopedia.com*. 20 Nov. 2015.) Pulling at this string, the role of Overseer and Driver parallels the relationship of farmer to sheepdog to cattle/crowd where the Overseer is the farmer and the Sheepdog is the reliable steward of the livestock.

dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly. (86)<sup>108</sup>

The zoomorphism of Septimus and Evans draws on nineteenth century and earlier notions that homosexuality is written on the body. War was a masculine affair of men-only spaces where homoerotic trysts would and could be pursued. To attain “manliness” suggests that Septimus became an object of the male gaze as he drew the attention and affection of Evans. Moreover, Woolf is alluding to the Victorian code of manliness that emerged under new British Imperialism,<sup>109</sup> where honor and valorization elevated class through the rhetoric of prestige and nationalism.<sup>110</sup> Despite being a champion dog in the trenches however, this status does not translate to a seat among the idle London crowd. Septimus hides his humble beginnings with his “distinguished” name and military success, thus circumventing his hereditary social rank and posing as a pedigreed dog. Yet he has doubly condemned himself by engaging in homosexual acts as well as impersonating the gentry. The abrupt death of Evans at the end of the war heaves Septimus back among the “civilians” or the civilized, where in this novel, civilization occupies and engages with an impractical system of social order that is distinctly separate from the military. His sudden marriage to the Italian, Lucrezia, is a literal and symbolic run for cover, as it is no coincidence that Lucrezia's occupation as a hat maker appeals to Septimus as he sees in her

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<sup>108</sup> Making love and “blinking at the fire” aligns this wartime passion for Evans with the subsequent symbolic use of fire in Septimus's postwar rantings of Evan's ghost, crying into the “flames” of judgment from “faces laughing at him, calling him horrible disgusting names, from the walls, and hands pointing round the screen” (67). The thematic use of fire signifies passions without boundaries as well as the severe punishment for engaging in same-sex relationships. As fire was at one time used to carry out executions for homosexual acts, in England, execution for homosexual acts lasted until the mid-nineteenth century. In France, “Confinement was a singular attenuation of the punishment, when compared to the ancient punishment of *ignis et incendium* – being burnt at the stake – that the laws still on the statutes prescribed, which recommended that anyone who falls into these crimes is to burnt alive”(Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness* 87- 88).

<sup>109</sup> The rhetoric of manliness appeared in contrast to the “savage” and was derived from British Imperialism and its discourses on honor, gamesmanship, and military codes. First World War literature by writers such as Rudyard Kipling, Rupert Brooke, Thomas Hughes, and Conan Doyle valorized masculinity and democratized honor in what had been strictly a virtue of the aristocracy.

<sup>110</sup> Bradley Deane. *Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in Popular British Literature 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 22.

“hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge” (87). The marriage to Lucrezia—like her hats—is a cover protecting him from the pointing fingers of London society. Septimus however has no escape from power’s limit other than in the act of suicide.<sup>111</sup> In his act of dodging the system, Septimus reveals the primitivism rooted underneath human societies by “see[ing] into the future, when dogs will become men” (68). Here, Woolf is plainly revealing the palimpsest to her work in which the world of couture canines lies parallel to the rules of English society.

Deviant sexual behavior was at one time considered to be hereditary, or a consequence of “bad blood.” Septimus’s inability to procreate with his wife Lucrezia is not entirely due to his homosexuality or lack of attraction; rather, he believed that had he done his “duty” and created children, he would knowingly “increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that” (89). Echoing Miss Kilman’s spiritual ranting “it was the flesh” (128) poverty, criminal behavior, and homosexual desire were thought to be rooted in physiology. However, reproduction implicates the practice of eugenics, and breed standing must be beyond the pale to enter into the inner circle of pedigreed bodies. Through a stream of consciousness, Sir William Bradshaw reveals himself to be one of the most virulent forces working within this system. Under the guise of working for the “good of society” (102), Bradshaw identifies those who exhibit “unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by the lack of good blood” (102), thereby separating “mongrels” from the rest of the community. Sir William Bradshaw and Dr. Holmes are the show dog judges, requisitioning bodies for asylums so that they may not pollute the blooded stock, doing so by “snuffing into every secret place!” (147) in the way that a show delegate intimately prods and

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<sup>111</sup> Harriet Ritvo’s *Animal Estate*, 92.

Incidentally, when Dr. Holmes screams “coward” as Septimus falls to his death, Woolf is playing on the trope of dog fancying as any dog with questionable pedigree was referred to as a “mongrel” or a “coward.”



pokes a canine specimen. Sir William's "invoking proportions" of his patients until "a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve" (99) aligns with the rigid body proportions of breed standards. Sir William prides himself for secluding England's lunatics, forbidding childbirth, and penalizing despair, he has "made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion" (99), relating to the principles of eugenics in which the Kennel Club is founded: the selected breeding and removal of deviant traits from the gene pool. Moreover, Sir William Bradshaw acts as a judge of breeding as he considers himself a "fine figurehead of ceremonies." As a specialist in "nerve cases," Bradshaw is associated with the human equivalent of the Kennel Club's temperament test. According to Kennel Club rules, a potential show dog must undergo a battery of behavior and temperament tests in order to acquire an official KC registration, paralleling Bradshaw's policing of mental stability.

The human/dog boundary is more easily revealed when the anthropological machine actively engages with animalizing the human. The victims of prestige and pedigree are the middling bodies that have lived to see the turn of the century but it is too late for them to be absorbed into the modern era. Cheated out of the potential to rise out of poverty and the working class, Miss Kilman's large body and choice of dress distinctly position her apart from pedigreed human society. Miss Kilman embodies the restrictive culture in the way that her physicality is described: she is modern in that she is biologically second-rate and naturally inferior compared to the authenticity of the noble classes. Her academic acumen, the reviled mackintosh coat, her guardianship of Elizabeth, and the allusion to her "prayer book," or book of laws, task her with the role of a working guard dog on the cusp of becoming a useless mongrel when Elizabeth no

longer needs her.<sup>112</sup> Clarissa's suggestion that her daughter would be better off with "distemper and tar instead of mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book" suggests canine distemper as well as distemper of "hysterical passion," a mental illness brought on by a woman's confinement (11).<sup>113</sup> Which is to say that no matter what Elizabeth chooses to do with her life, she will nonetheless be a dog-woman bred to perform a role within the social network. In their canine embodiment, Miss Kilman, Clarissa, and Elizabeth are obliged to reinforce socio-cultural boundaries within a hierarchy that confines them. These women have the (dis)advantage to either marry into the institution of "tar"—representative of an early elixir to treat distemper as well as symbolic of the British war and industrial complex—or remain single under the pretense of religious chastity.<sup>114</sup>

Miss Kilman's hatred of Clarissa does not entirely stem from Clarissa's place of privilege, but rather because their biopolitical functions are similarly configured. Clarissa has the upper hand by way of a heightened status obtained through marriage and is tasked with the role of herding out lower class bodies, where Miss Kilman is Elizabeth's guardian. The love/hate relationship between the two women draws on Kennel Club canine taxonomy in that both women embody the characteristics of herding and guard dogs. These breed groups are close

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<sup>112</sup> The mackintosh coat was popularized in the nineteenth century and subsequently supplied to the British Army, British Railways and UK police forces. H. Schurer, "The Macintosh - the Paternity of an Invention." *Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, 28 (1953): 77-78.

<sup>113</sup> The ghost of the asylum lingers in the margins of the novel. In addition to Septimus's proposed institutionalization, there is an insinuation that the wives of Hugh Whitbread and Sir William Bradshaw have been sick with a "female" disorder, something that Clarissa jestingly acknowledges only women can speak of to one another as hysteria was considered to be a malady originating in the womb. The threat of institutionalization traverses class boundaries – everyone is vulnerable to involuntary incarceration and exclusion from society. Under the auspices of scientific knowledge, medical practitioners had the right to segregate the clinically "mad" from the rest of society. Traces of the asylum segue with class mobility in that there is no guarantee of a static place within the class hierarchy while at the same time the remnants of the imperial regime are still buried underneath what looks to be a more bureaucratic state. Like their human counterpart, any "purebred" dog had the potentiality to be ushered out of the Kennel Club registry based on poor breeding, over-breeding, and crossbreeding. Poor health, whether temperamental or physical, was a terrible but frequent problem with maintaining older bloodlines.

<sup>114</sup> Tar was used to treat distemper in animals until a vaccine was developed in 1924, although the vaccine was not put into commercial use until 1950. Wealthy patrons associated with the sporting journal *The Field* spearheaded the development of a vaccine. Bresalier and Worboys, "Saving the Lives of Our Dogs," 305.

sisters in their workability, with size and aggression figuring in as discernable differences. The urban city may have treated shepherd-like behaviors as a necessary role within a Victorian social network, and Clarissa is cognizant that this job is quickly fading away with the new era. So too the utility of shepherd dogs was lost within the borders of the cityscape as there were no predators, thus playing on the idea that the interwar period brought hope to the foreigner, the homosexual, and the proletariat that they would eventually be treated as equals. The guard dog cousin however was bred to be the ideal working dog in an urban landscape,<sup>115</sup> as it could perform duties alongside its blue-collar human—hence Clarissa’s uneasiness with Miss Kilman’s literal and figurative proximity, as Miss Kilman is the only other character/breed who risks supplanting her in a changing social structure.<sup>116</sup> Miss Kilman’s “unlovable body” follows the logic of breeding, it is a lower-class body that does not have the advantage to be born into the flesh of high society; it is representative of the working class body that is expendable but has no bearing or power in “civilized” society. Through the focalized stream of consciousness, Mrs. Dalloway and Miss Kilman are fully aware of their positions: Clarissa is grounded only by breeding and a secure marriage, and if either of those subsets should fail, the fall would be steep. Miss Kilman can survive as a working dog in the city, but her “mongrel” pedigree still undermines her practicality. In *Aristocracies of Fiction*, Len Platt clarifies this tension by noting that “the Edwardian bourgeoisie and traditional aristocracy could be constructed not as antagonists but, ironically enough, as sister classes, both on the brink of catastrophe, both victims of the same ‘masses’.”<sup>117</sup> Through Platt’s implication, the anxiety between Miss Kilman and Clarissa can be understood as Miss Kilman embodying the predatory masses who are working to

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<sup>115</sup> Kern, 12.

<sup>116</sup> When Clarissa remarks, “for no doubt with another throw of the dice, had the black been uppermost and not the white”(12), Woolf is alluding to race relations that would invert her privileged status and is a play on the idea of the rather arbitrary color preferences of breed standards despite coloration varying from generation to generation.

<sup>117</sup> Platt. *Aristocracies of Fiction*, 44.

overthrow the inner circle that Clarissa has dutifully protected. Moreover, Clarissa is the cardinal point of the circle's dissolution and would be the first "casualty" in its fall, as the point of incursion would naturally take place between dogs of the same variety.

As Elizabeth's steward, Miss Kilman has tethered herself to Elizabeth by the "very entrails in her body," effectively creating a social network of their own where Elizabeth is the dominant body and Miss Kilman is submissive in canine-like adoration (132-133). However, as the pressure of time hovers over the narrative, so too Elizabeth will grow out of her need for a tutor as she will soon enter into adulthood and become obedient to the legacy of her heritage. Miss Kilman's final exclusion from "the fold of civilization" will, as Vicki Tromanhauser notes, leave her "sniffing about the borders of human fellowship."<sup>118</sup> Without representation within the anthropological machine, Miss Kilman is threatened by erasure within human society in her complete union with the animal.

There is the assumption that Miss Kilman sees the potential for a *young* postwar upper-class woman as having the ability to enter into a professional career that she was robbed of, as she postulates that Elizabeth "might be a doctor. She might be a farmer. Animals are often ill" (136). Yet, Woolf is not precisely acknowledging new or budding opportunities for women in the interwar period. Instead she is gentrifying the establishment by proposing Elizabeth's indoctrination into another canine pack social system. The possibility that Elizabeth will be a doctor or farmer suggests she will eventually enlist with the powers that maneuver those who exist within the human-animal social structure: the doctor who sniffs out the mentally ill like that of Sir William Bradshaw, checking "proportions" as does a judge of the urban pet fancier; or, like her father who is conceivably a farmer maintaining the boundaries around cattle that will eventually feed the State. Perhaps then, Miss Kilman believes that Elizabeth could rule over the

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<sup>118</sup> Vicki Tromanhauser. "Mrs. Dalloway's Animals and the Humanist Laboratory." 191.

canine-human society as a woman, however she does not conceive of a material change in human social/pack dynamics. Despite Elizabeth's exotic looks, Woolf's characters who embody the old Victorian regime expect Elizabeth to continue with the ceremony of class. Throughout the novel, Clarissa sees her daughter as inhabiting a space of uncertainty. It is Elizabeth's performance and behavior in elite social settings that concerns Clarissa, foregoing the idea that Elizabeth could simply survive by her patrician pedigree. The allusion to "care[ing] for her dog" (11) recalls the earlier scene of Clarissa's relationship with her childhood dog from the Bourton estate. Thus this could be a foretelling of Elizabeth's eventual falling in alignment with "proper," albeit Victorian/Edwardian society within which Clarissa has familiarity.

At the conclusion of the novel, Elizabeth is the new dog on show where Clarissa's party brings together an aristocratic circle of the most esteemed pedigreed bodies. Her guests include no fewer than "two lords (Lord Lexham and Lord Gayton), six ladies (Lady Mary Maddox, Lady Bruton, Lady Rosseter, Lady Bradshaw, Lady Lovejoy, and Lady Needham), three knights (Sir John Needham, Sir William Bradshaw, and old Sir Harry)," the Prime Minister,<sup>119</sup> members of Parliament, a Professor and a student. Each body represents a political and economic component of Victorian/Edwardian society. With Elizabeth's Fox Terrier locked away upstairs from the party "since it bit," Tromanhauser observes this to be a recollection of the "mortality and suffering we share with other animals."<sup>120</sup> In addition to this animal registry of human trauma, Woolf is also drawing on the (then) recent history of the breed, consciously aligning Elizabeth with the new sensibilities of the modern era. The Fox Terrier was standardized at the turn of the century, and is a product of no less than five British breeds—the Beagle, the Dalmatian, The Old English Bulldog, the Pointer, and the English Toy Terrier—thus, embodying the notion of the

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<sup>119</sup> Len Platt created a list of the Dalloway partygoers, and I use his catalog of bodies here. (Platt 124).

<sup>120</sup> Vicki Tromanhauser. "Mrs. Dalloway's Animals and the Humanist Laboratory." 206.

surging and mingling British masses.<sup>121</sup> This could be Woolf's allusion to our survival as a species since Elizabeth's animality is a blend of all things British, therefore expressing some optimism over the possibility that pernicious codes over sex, gender, and class could be erased or blurred. However, the point still rides the line of ambiguity considering Elizabeth's animality is a derivation of pedigreed groups, ergo, an aggregate of the old gentry that survives a superficial evolution wherein capitalism replaces the patrician system. If canine behavior is synonymous for human nature, then *Mrs. Dalloway* foreshadows a perpetual cycle of dominance and subordination well beyond the twentieth century.

As a modernist novel, Woolf interrogates the boundary between human society formation and animal culture, exposing these hierarchal lines as moveable and uncertain despite pedigree. The modern scions of the new aristocracy were considered to be vulgar and abrasive, a clichéd collection of *nouveaux riches*, whereas noblemen and women of pedigreed descent were exemplars of dignity and elegance but also no longer common in the early twentieth century.<sup>122</sup> The line between proletariat and aristocrat was unpredictable in relation to women as their status was contingent on pedigree, performance of class, and marriage. Upper class women inhabited a privileged space that effectively provided them, at the least, an extent commodity within nineteenth century social constructs but dwindled in the early twentieth century. What remained in England were the tributes to the old regime, celebrated in the pomp and splendor of dog shows and exotic animal exhibitions. For Woolf, the idea of the pedigreed dog embodied the artificial arrangement of bodies; it was a spectacle of nobility that was merely hanging on to the last

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<sup>121</sup> Haynes 24-25. When the Fox Terrier joined both the UKC and the AKC, it quickly won "best in show" at Westminster in 1907, 1908, and 1909. Moreover, it is a dog historically used by nobles and royalty in fox hunting.

<sup>122</sup> In *Aristocracies of Fiction*, Len Platt discusses the degeneracy of the aristocracy in popular fiction. Although he is discussing Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), the bawdy conversation between Willie Titcomb, Sir Harry, and Hubert Ainsty at Clarissa Dalloway's party is arguably similar. See: Len Platt, *Aristocracies of Fiction*, pg. 32.

vestiges of a social structure that no longer had a purpose in modernity. Nonetheless, Woolf does not write her way out of this problem, as neither dogs nor humans are liberated from the anthropomorphic machine. What comes after postwar Britain is another sociocultural network that includes or excludes bodies using language to distinguish the human from the nonhuman.<sup>123</sup> In other words, the dog-person is the presupposed figure within human culture, and it is the rules of the anthropological machine that changes.

While the British aristocracy did not “suffer” as much as other European nobilities during the age of revolutions, their decline aligned itself with the rest of the European bluebloods, and they lost their social dominance with the First World War. As their role as models for the rest of their countrymen waned, they become omnipresent in literature. In France, Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* can be read in this perspective as the swan’s song of a group that is being replaced by its bourgeois counterpart. For England, Len Platt successfully argued that their heightened literary visibility is the consequence of their loss of social domination, and the pages of the novel become a refuge for this now mostly imaginary aristocracy. Woolf’s trick is to establish parallels between her fictional aristocrats and their four-legged companions. While the humans obey commands as is expected of civil servants raised in a culture of service to the Queen and state, their dogs obey the voice of their masters. Just as the dogs are bred for specific tasks, the men and women of the class are raised to perform a specific social function, and are expected not to deviate from the course imposed by their birth. Finally, both are well-bred. This last comparison is revealing and problematic. Dog breeding follows the principle that by a careful selection of individual dogs possessing specific traits, one can create a race in which those traits will be fixed and maintained throughout the course of time. The aristocracy’s

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<sup>123</sup> Ideas on language and distinctions between human and nonhuman are taken from Giorgio Agamben’s chapter on the “Anthropomorphic Machine” in *The Open*, pp. 33-8.

discourse about itself follows the same principle: for centuries, the nobility composed of the best has been mating within itself, thus creating a superior race fit for power. The comparison, while logical, is nevertheless false: aristocrats are not superior products of eugenics, but rather the product of a naturalization of a social difference. They are dominant because of their social position, not because of some sort of biological superiority. Nevertheless, when referring to themselves, they revel in displaying this age-old ambiguity between nature and culture. The genealogical illusion of a superiority of birth has enabled them to withstand many centuries of upheavals and changes, always remaining on top, masquerading a social and economic superiority as a genetic advantage. But as modernity consumes their last privileges, the aristocracy becomes more and more confined to the pages of the novel, to a literary imaginary. A disappearing breed, their social exploits and table manner prowess had to be documented and kept alive by those who saw this loss with nostalgia and thought of this decline as an irreparable disaster for the Empire. Their literary survival was a one-way trip to the kennels of history.



UNDRESSING WOOLF'S *ORLANDO*: THE BIOPOLITICS OF EMPIRE WHEN DOGS  
CANNOT SPEAK

The spaniel licked Orlando with her tongue. Orlando stroked the spaniel with her hand. Orlando kissed the spaniel with her lips. In short, there was the truest sympathy between them that can be between a dog and its mistress, and yet, it cannot be denied that the dumbness of animals is a great impediment to the refinements of intercourse. They wag their tails; they bow the front part of the body and elevate the hind; they roll, they jump, they paw, they whine, they bark, they slobber; they have all sorts of ceremonies and artifices of their own, but the whole thing is of no avail, since speak they cannot.

—Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* 143-144

Virginia Woolf's fantastic epic *Orlando* (published in 1928) is—to borrow from the Gilles Deleuze's lexicon—a “crystal image”<sup>124</sup> that embodies Woolf's aristocratic lover, Vita Sackville-West, and allegorizes shifting sexual politics, doing so through the lens of socio-historical constructs of class and gender. *Orlando* is a criticism of these erroneous categorical systems that oblige bodies to mate based on rules that have no essential connection to desire or love. Human intervention meddles with desire by exerting internal and external social pressures on the body. The rules involving gender performance and class decorum do not produce a genetically superior form rather, these categories are assumed behaviors in a masculinist version of evolution. The narrative of *Orlando* therefore plays along with these ideas of subordination to a taxonomical order despite sexual fluidity. The way in which Woolf produces these ideas is through the animal body, an homage to Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf's canine intermediary. Sackville-West's gift of a well-bred Spaniel to Woolf became their “façon de

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<sup>124</sup> A “crystal image” infuses past events in a present image, becoming a two-way mirror that looks towards a future that is conceptualized from antecedent events or experiences. Gilles Deleuze *The Time Image: Cinema 2*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, 68.

parler” of their love affair.<sup>125</sup> Appropriately, the Spaniel is also the animal stand-in for the character of Orlando. But more importantly, the dog represents a body that is not recognized as a fully-fledged human being – she is the lesbian, the foreigner, and a woman. Acknowledging and communicating with Woolf’s dogs are not only unavoidable, but *knowing* Woolf’s dogs cunningly reposition the animal/human, and gender/sex binaries on neutral ground.

Woolf imagined a posthumanist landscape long before its philosophical and cultural theories emerged. The scholar on all things dogs, Donna Haraway, decenters the human from its primacy by suggesting, “we have never been human.”<sup>126</sup> Recognizing the co-evolution between humans and dogs, she indicates twentieth century dog fancying practices as sharing conventions of human sociocultural production, where strict codes of behavioral and breeding rules separate “civil society” from the “mongrel.”<sup>127</sup> I argue that sociocultural ontologies are embedded within the dog body by its very appearance. Human intervention has worked to separate the purebred from the “mongrel,” thus enforcing visually discernable differences between dog-types. Moreover, dogs have adapted to human life inasmuch as they are an animal reflection of their human master. Orlando is a simulacrum of a well-bred dog as shown through his noble lineage, and while he/she can change her clothes to enact a male or female performance, her animality is intractable, and a reflection of how human dogma operates on the body.

Woolf more directly juxtaposes animality with andocentric domination in *A Room of One’s Own*. Jane Marcus has said that the work is both a seduction and a lesson to Vita Sackville-West on the necessity of being a feminist.<sup>128</sup> I argue that *Orlando* is an extension of that lesson, not just for Vita, but also for any woman who is caged by sexual politics. While Vita

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<sup>125</sup> Victoria Glendinning, *Vita: A Biography of Vita Sackville-West*, p.436.

<sup>126</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 1.

<sup>127</sup> Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, 16.

<sup>128</sup> Marcus, 166.

Sackville-West's trouser-wearing gender ambiguity inspired Woolf to write *Orlando*, it is also a novel that Vita insisted should be "dedicate[ed] to your victim."<sup>129</sup> Virginia Woolf's "victim," at least when it comes to political criticism within the world of the novel is surprisingly not men, but rather towards women who reinforce their own gendered bondage within a system that erases subjectivity and autonomous involvement within the world. Despite the novel's three hundred year stretch, Woolf focuses her critique on female monarchs, as they reify and contribute to the patriarchal privilege of men, rather than elevate women towards a more commensurate position. As she does with Lady Bruton in *Mrs. Dalloway*,<sup>130</sup> Woolf uses female monarchs in *Orlando* specifically to denounce women with a semblance of power who are traitors to their own sex.

Orlando's long life can be explained by Queen Victoria's indelible mark on England, as her death was a rather traumatic event for her subjects who had "never known a time when Queen Victoria had not been reigning over them,"<sup>131</sup> a notion that clarifies why Orlando's incalculable lifetime has neither a beginning nor an end. The Victorian biography was a popular genre of the modern era but it was Bloomsbury Group member, Lytton Strachey, who would usher in a new style by "spread[ing] a layer of wit over his deepest convictions and develop an informal way of combining irony with allusiveness [in order to] 'attack his subject in unexpected places'."<sup>132</sup> He authored the famous 1921 biography entitled *Queen Victoria*, dedicating the book to Virginia Woolf.<sup>133</sup> While *Queen Victoria* documents significant events in Victoria's life, Strachey includes discourse on her treatment of the public and their reception to her rule.

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<sup>129</sup> *Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*, 11 Oct. 1927, p. 252.

<sup>130</sup> In *Mrs. Dalloway*, "emigration had become, in short, largely Lady Bruton" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 109). Coupled with the knowledge that Lady Bruton would exclude women from her parlor politics, she is a reproduction of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria who were both apostates to the emancipation of women.

<sup>131</sup> Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, pp.423.

<sup>132</sup> Holroyd, Michael. *Lytton Strachey: The New Biography*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995, p.82.

<sup>133</sup> In a bid to escape unhappiness as well as his homosexuality, Lytton Strachey proposed marriage to Virginia Woolf (prior to Leonard Woolf). She quickly accepted, but the following day they both acknowledged that their marriage plot was dangerous, as it was Lytton's understanding that Virginia's lack of sexual experience (at least

While *Orlando* invokes Queen Victoria's reign, the novel is inarguably inspired by Vita Sackville-West's free-spirited *jouissance*. Published in 1928, *Orlando* is not the only biography that Woolf composed.<sup>134</sup> She wrote at least two "fantastic" biographies—*Orlando* and *Flush*—wherein both novels do the work of a biography but do so through fictionalized narratives in order to cross-dress questions of power. Maria DiBattista makes a peculiar connection between these two biographies, noting that the "biographer possesses the enviable ability to enter the consciousness of another species."<sup>135</sup> *Flush* and *Orlando* censor human desire and sexuality by maintaining a façade of heteronormativity through canine embodiment. Stringing along these connections between *Orlando*, *A Room of One's Own*, and *Flush*, Woolf is able to blend biography and the historical production of companion species in order to articulate questions of power, thus exposing the fabulated nature of human culture.

The interplay between authors and the recipients of their book can signal vital biographical information regarding the author at the time of a novel's creation.<sup>136</sup> Early modern book dedications engaged with the patronage system, often written in such a way as to inspire, curry favor, or equally condemn patrons and readers.<sup>137</sup> But as Marlene Wagman-Geller notes,

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with men) would leave her emotionally unprepared to enter into a relationship with a homosexual man who wanted to continue his sexual pursuits with other men. Holroyd, Michael. *Lytton Strachey: The New Biography*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995, p. 201.

<sup>134</sup> A collection of her earliest short stories chronicle the lives of women in her 1909, "Memoirs of a Novelist"; the 1927 novel, *To the Lighthouse* blends biography and autobiography; her 1933 novel, *Flush* follows Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel; and one of her last works to be published during her lifetime, *Roger Fry* (1940) was her only serious venture in biographical writing as she was commemorating her dead friend.

<sup>135</sup> DiBattista, Introduction, *Orlando*. lii.

<sup>136</sup> Marlene Wagman-Geller, *Once Again to Zelda: The Stories Behind Literature's Most Intriguing Dedications*, New York: Penguin Group, 2008, pp. 2.

<sup>137</sup> Author Mary Elizabeth Brown compiles book dedications as they appear from the early days of printing until the 1960s in her work entitled, *Dedications: an Anthology of the Forms Used from the earliest Days of Book-making to the Present Time*. New York: G.P. Putnam, 1913. Most scholarly critiques of literary dedications and front pieces concentrate on works produced under the patronage system. One of the most recent glosses of more contemporary dedications can be found in Marlene Wagman-Geller's work, *Once Again to Zelda: The Stories Behind Literature's Most Intriguing Dedications*, published in 2008. Although the study of literary dedications (especially in regards to the early twentieth century) is still in its inaugural stages of establishing a theoretical framework, there is arguably something quite unique in the interaction between the creative output of the Bloomsbury Group and small publishing houses: both were removed from any obligation to an officious sponsor, but were in many ways beholden

over the last two centuries literary dedications took on a more personal nature. It was Leonard and Virginia Woolf's personal publishing house, Hogarth Press that printed nearly all the works of Vita Sackville-West, thus creating an insular relationship between artist and design.<sup>138</sup> Vita's first joint collaboration with Hogarth was to be her 1924 novella entitled *Seducers in Ecuador* wherein the front piece was made in dedication to Virginia Woolf.<sup>139</sup> Incidentally, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) was dedicated to Lytton Strachey, and Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (1921) was dedicated to Woolf, thus Woolf creates a node in a web of exchange with her dedication of *Orlando* (1928) to Vita. In the closing pages of *Orlando*, Woolf is explicit about this negotiation between authors when she questions: "[w]as not writing poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice?" (238). For her, the act of writing was not for the sake of garnering fame or praise, but rather the narrative of *Orlando* is an intellectual collaboration – a "secret transaction" between Lytton Strachey and Vita Sackville-West as interlocutors. This collaboration can be seen in the way that *Orlando* plays with the fluidity of gender and sexuality, as these themes are echoed in Lytton Strachey's biography of Queen Victoria—where he implies that Prince Albert was gay, as well as many of the other lavender relationships among Bloomsbury Group members and friends.<sup>140</sup><sup>141</sup> *Orlando* is notoriously difficult because the eponymous hero flips genders, is entangled with "dubious" lesbian affairs, and manages to endure a plot line that covers several

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to each other as they were working within a close-knit literary community, exchanging and challenging ideas between one another.

<sup>138</sup> Helen Southworth, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, pp. 234.

<sup>139</sup> DeSalvo, Louise and Mitchell A. Leaska, eds. *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*. London: Hutchinson, 1984, pp.61

<sup>140</sup> Strachey states that Albert preferred the company of men as had a "marked distaste for the opposite sex," and did not reciprocate Victoria's love for him. Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, pp.136, 144.

<sup>141</sup> While sexuality was notoriously fluid amongst Bloomsbury group members, biographer Michael Holroyd chronicles Lytton Strachey's struggle to maintain his relationship with his lover, Ralph Partridge, by living in a three-way relationship with the artist, Dora Carrington in order to appear—at least to panoptic eyes—as a heterosexual affair (Holroyd 485).

centuries.<sup>142</sup> In the novel, gender transformations are as easy as a taking a nap and changing clothes.

Woolf as the nameless biographer of *Orlando*, insinuates that the outside perception of selfhood is elusive because the self exists in relation to a rigid social fabric, and clothing is merely satisfying a political or social necessity. Using canine animality as a presupposed status, Woolf is then able to expose human “desire” as something that is pushed and pulled by intrinsic and extrinsic political forces. The animal is foregrounded in proximity to human hierarchies and andocentric domination. In her *Companion Species Manifesto*, Donna Haraway describes biopower and biosociality as a “bestiary of agencies” into which companion animals are interpellated: “partners in the crime of human evolution.”<sup>143</sup> Woolf echoes these sentiments in her earlier essays as she observes “these wild creatures [who] forego their nature for ours, which at best they can but imitate? It is one of the refined sins of civilization, for we know not what wild spirit we are taking from its purer atmosphere.”<sup>144</sup> The suggestion here is that animals are self-governing; they have languages and desires that we, as humans, monopolize and ignore their idiosyncratic engagements within and without their proximate territories. Thus, it is within the spaces of Woolf’s free indirect discourse where anthropomorphized canine bodies appear and demand to be read in terms of their biopolitical production and lesbian intimacy: the clothing serves as a cover inasmuch as the State is the structure in which Orlando is garbed. The nameless biographer asserts that “Different though the sexes are, they intermix,” hinting at how the novel should be read, going on to emphasize that: “In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while

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<sup>142</sup> In Desmond MacCarthy’s review of *Orlando* in the *Sunday Times* (14 Oct. 1928), he refers to the novel as “pure fantasy.” Arnold Bennett refers to the novel as a “Woman’s High-Brow Lark” in the *Evening Standard*, dated 8 Nov. 1928. See *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 222, 232.

<sup>143</sup> Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, 5-7.

<sup>144</sup> Woolf, “On a Faithful Friend,” 12.

underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above.”<sup>145</sup> Thus, Woolf posits that “nature” an empty category by exposing the artificiality of classifying bodies based on outward signifiers.

*Orlando* is overlaid by natural history and sociocultural hallmarks, but the essence of being skirts these manufactured systems. The tension between appearances, performances, and the natural world had seemingly been on Virginia Woolf’s mind for most of her life. She was indoctrinated into the human-animal question by birth. Author and alpinist, Sir Leslie Stephen, who also happened to be Virginia’s father, had responded to Darwin’s “community of descent”<sup>146</sup> by declaring himself “glad to see the poor beasts getting their revenge.”<sup>147</sup>

Thereafter, Virginia shared a passion of natural history with the other Stephen siblings, falling in with the popularity of British naturalists who were quickly refining their science at the turn of the century. Turning away from the endless (and sometimes erroneous) taxonomical classification of species that hallmarked the nineteenth century, Naturalists turned towards a closer look at morphology and physiology (the study of structure and the functioning of the body).<sup>148</sup> At the outset of the twentieth century, ethology and ecology, which focuses on animal behavior and their relationship in and of the world, took the forefront of modern scientific speculation.<sup>149</sup>

Woolf engaged with the practice of collecting and classifying species during her childhood as she, along with the other Stephen children, were featured in the regional *Hyde Park Gate News*, declaring themselves to be “enthusiastic butterfly collectors.”<sup>150</sup> Her brother, Thoby took the hobby seriously into adulthood while Virginia used the experience to develop her own literary tradition that was inspired by the study of natural history.<sup>151</sup> She would later receive criticism

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<sup>145</sup> *Orlando*, 139.

<sup>146</sup> Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 43.

<sup>147</sup> Sir Leslie Stephen, “Darwin and Divinity,” p. 191.

<sup>148</sup> Alt. *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* 3.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>150</sup> *Moments of Being*. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. London: Pimlico, 2002. pp.113.

<sup>151</sup> Alt. *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*. 72.

over her descriptions of wildlife and horticulture after the 1927 publication of *To the Lighthouse* by natural history enthusiasts.<sup>152</sup> Woolf responds to this criticism in the preface of *Orlando*, where she offers a cutting acknowledgement to the gentleman “who has generously and gratuitously corrected the punctuation, the botany, the entomology, the geography, and the chronology of previous works of mine and will, I hope not spare his services on the present occasion.”<sup>153</sup> The irony would have been lost on the persnickety American “gentleman” who was obviously incapable of reading Woolf’s characters in terms of their animal avatars whose animacies had more to do with subjectivity in a world that is artificially ordered.<sup>154</sup> In *Orlando*, and arguably most of Woolf’s work, her characters fluctuate between ruthless gamekeeper and subjugated pet depending on who is maintaining and preserving Victorian decorum; animality emerges in opposition to the more archaic taxonomical version of natural science, a system that can be superimposed on politically engineered human hierarchies.

In the first half of *Orlando*, Woolf builds an ecological study of her humans by objectifying the British congregation and treating them as units within a social hierarchy. When Orlando first meets the exotic Muscovite princess, a brilliant carnival is constructed in London for the coronation of the King.<sup>155</sup> Prince Albert had similarly arranged, “without consulting anyone” what was to be the Great Exhibition of 1851, in what was a grand exposition of British “progress” and “prosperity.”<sup>156</sup> This scene as it appears in *Orlando* has largely been associated

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<sup>152</sup> Shortly after the publication of her novel, *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf received a letter from a Lord Olivier telling her that “her descriptions of the fauna and flora of the Hebrides were totally inaccurate” from Quentin Bell’s *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, vol. II (London: Hogarth, 1972), p. 129.

<sup>153</sup> *Orlando* 6.

<sup>154</sup> The limitations between who can and who cannot participate in the practice of natural history is replayed in Woolf’s *Night and Day* and *The Years* with the characters of Cassandra Otway and Rose Pargiter, respectively. This suggests Woolf was well aware that women were excluded from this particular intellectual sphere, thus infusing it into her work as subversive irony.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>156</sup> *Queen Victoria* 196.



with the Frost Fairs held on the river Thames during the seventeenth century.<sup>157</sup> However, the way in which Woolf includes specific symbols of British achievement, her emphasis on the courtly spectacle with a clear separation from the lower classes, a line of association is made with Prince Albert's grand vision of the outrageously expensive conservatory nicknamed The Crystal Palace.<sup>158</sup> Woolf writes the scene as a "semblance of a park or a pleasure ground"<sup>159</sup> over the veneer of a frozen river. This allusion to ice signifies perception through glass or display cases on exhibit. As night descends, the scene of the carnival is fixed under a glass dome "with the hard fixity of diamonds,"<sup>160</sup> Incidentally, The Great Exhibition originally took place in Hyde Park, but the Crystal Palace was eventually moved to Sydenham after its six-month roost in London proper.<sup>161</sup> The removal of such an imposing structure is described through Orlando's point of view as he stands and watches in awe as "furniture, valuables, possessions of all sorts were carried away on the icebergs."<sup>162</sup> Thus, all the trinkets representative of British wealth and prosperity are removed: they are categorized and appraised, placed under glass in their own "iceberg." When the river thaws and the ice breaks apart, some of Woolf's actors float away on the ice as "they knew their doom was certain."<sup>163</sup> Others grasp their "silver pot[s]" and "gold goblet[s]"<sup>164</sup> willingly floating away holding religious relics and prized possessions. The illusion of British progress and prosperity is commensurate by degree of domination and separation, and thus the scene plays out with British citizens literally grasping onto whatever iceberg holds their

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<sup>157</sup> An overwhelming number of scholars have attributed this moment in the novel with the Frost Fairs of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A quick gloss of Jonathan Schner's *The Thames* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), Paula Maggio's essay within the collection *Reading the Skies in Virginia Woolf* (London: Cecil Woolf, 2008), and SueEllen Campbell's *The Face of the Earth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) are a few places to start.

<sup>158</sup> In Harriet Ritvo's gloss of early dog fancying, she notes that by 1890 "over seventeen hundred [dogs] were entered into a show at the Crystal Palace" (Ritvo 98). Suggesting here that the "icebergs" in *Orlando* double as taxonomical displays of people as various dog breeds, or classed bodies categorized under glass.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>161</sup> *Queen Victoria* 202.

<sup>162</sup> *Orlando* 47.

<sup>163</sup> *Orlando* 47.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* 47.

affiliated class—symbols of wealth, status, and religion. However, before Orlando can elope with the Muscovite Princess, she floats away too, as hegemonic authority will not tolerate a marriage outside of the British social network.

Orlando is consistently flanking the edges of human categorization, oscillating between ingratiating the Sovereign in exchange for sovereignty, while conceding to his fleshly desires despite their incongruences with the ruling order. The novel opens with Orlando sequestered away in the attic of his paternal estate sometime in the year 1500, then registers a quick leap in time to the final years of Queen Elizabeth’s reign. Playing on the trope of the “Bedroom School,” Orlando’s introduction to the outside world is met with “sights [that] disturbed him, like that of his mother.”<sup>165</sup> The “mother” is plainly the “mother of England,” but the early isolation of Orlando is also reminiscent of Victoria’s upbringing under the “Kensington System”<sup>166</sup> that resulted with Victoria shunning her mother, who for all intents and purposes kenneled Victoria like a dog. This is also an allusion to Shakespeare’s play *As You Like It*, where in the opening act Orlando enters the play by way of a “bedroom school” trope. However, in all three references there is a defiance of authority willing them to submit within a patriarchal structure. Shakespeare’s Orlando leaves his bedroom, declaring, “This is it, Adam, that grieves me; and the spirit of my father, which I think is within me, begins to mutiny against this servitude: I will no longer endure it” (*As You Like It* 1.1. 18-20). The bedroom school trope is significant in that it is the moment where a subject is confined to a point where they are driven to break out of the system that is working to control them. Woolf’s Orlando will journey through this bedroom

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<sup>165</sup> *Orlando* 13.

<sup>166</sup> The Kensington System was a set of rules created by Queen Victoria’s mother, Victoria, the Duchess of Kent, and Sir John Conroy, which was aimed at keeping the future Queen completely isolated and controlled in order to foster dependency and malleability in her mother’s ambitions for a regency. See Helen Rappaport’s *Queen Victoria: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2003), pp. 218-220.

school, but when the structural institution exerts itself over the will of Orlando, his canine animality is revealed.

To understand the initiation of Woolf's Orlando as a biopolitical animal, it is important to note that Elizabeth I, who is the first monarch that appears in the novel, also "cross-dressed" herself by identifying as having "the body of a weak, feeble woman; but the heart and stomach of a king," and yet she played-up her femininity as the "Virgin Queen." Scholars refer to her as a "political hermaphrodite,"<sup>167</sup> but whatever Elizabeth identified as, she was never a champion for British diversity. Orlando's introduction to Queen Elizabeth plays on the trope of zoomorphism and the rhetoric of dog fancying.

Female aristocrats kept pedigreed lap dogs as both totems of wealth and breeding, as well as tokens of Imperial conquests.<sup>168</sup> The toy spaniel is the most traceable pedigreed canine as it was handed down through the British monarchy. Queen Elizabeth I had a toy spaniel as a pet, and it was during her regime that the toy spaniel became an accessory to the throne as a "Comforter."<sup>169</sup> The breed of dog within *Orlando* is inscribed with materiality signifying an illusion of pedigree, one that is shared with the human aristocratic body. The historical production of canine and human are built on the unnatural rules of eugenics, and how these signifiers are panoptically recognized. Orlando is described in similar fashion to the toy spaniel so admired and painstakingly bred in English courts:

The red of the cheeks was covered with peach down; the down on the lips was only a little thicker than the down on the cheeks. The lips themselves were short and slightly

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<sup>167</sup> Haigh 29-30.

<sup>168</sup> Ritvo 85.

<sup>169</sup> "The 'Penny Encyclopedia' of 1841 states that Dr. Caius's Comforter, or Spaniel Gentle, was a Maltese, and stood alone as the lady's lap dog of his time [...] Dr. Caius was physician to Queen Elizabeth. The original text is in Latin—1570." *Toy Dogs and Their Ancestors*, p.25.

drawn back over the teeth of an exquisite and almond whiteness. Nothing disturbed the arrowy nose in its short, tense flight; the hair was dark, the ears small, and fitted closely to the head. (12)

Orlando's physical description is applied in such a way as a dog show judge admires the quality and proportions of breed standards.<sup>170</sup> He is aligned with a venerable noble body as he is described with having an "arroy nose," which is considered a distinct marker of the "original" Spaniel breed favored in the time of Henry VIII.<sup>171</sup> The "red down" of the cheeks and lips are reminiscent of Vita Sackville-West's Spaniel, Pinka who was a red dog. Further, the description of Orlando embodies Woolf's letter writing where she would describe making love to Vita Sackville-West using canine signifiers. Woolf is eroticizing the "down of the lips" and the "exquisite [...] almond whiteness" of a parted cleft. The "tense flight" of the "arroy nose" expresses the moments before orgasmic bliss. Thus, Woolf has crafted Orlando as an androgynous woman-dog, although one that is meek and diminutive to the old Elizabethan monarch:

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<sup>170</sup> In 1911, the "honorable" Mrs. Neville Lytton published an extensive examination of toy dogs and their ancestors wherein she attempts to reproduce a witty biographical sketch of various toy breeds, à la Lytton Strachey. Whilst appointing herself as eminent dog historian in the opening lines of her introduction: "I have made up my mind to write a book on Toy Dogs, because no one seems to know much about them or their history," she in turn validates the penning of the work by tracing her own pedigree to Lord Byron in addition to her familial history of canine fancying. Thus, Mrs. Lytton is superimposing species pedigree onto human ancestry, while legitimizing her work through an oblique connection with male authorship. Incidentally, Vita Sackville-West has a loose familial association with Lord Byron as is noted in her catalogue of Sackville ancestry, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, where the family chain breaks off in what is presumably an allusion to homosexuality in the family. The association between the spaniel, Bryon, and Vita, actuate the notion that one cannot breed-out homosexuality despite decades of arranged marriages between aristocratic bodies. Sexuality is naturally part of *bios*, but is mongrelized only once it becomes part of the State. What is notably different however is that Bryon had numerous affairs with both sexes and saw immense writerly success despite what Victorians would call "immoral content." But as women, both Vita and Virginia were obliged to gynomorphically cast their Byronic heroes in the consecutive novels, *Challenge* (1923) and *Orlando*, in order to allegorize affirmative same-sex relationships.

<sup>171</sup> From *The Field*, September 15, 1866: "On the origin of the dog (red-and-white Spaniel) [...] was cherished at the Court of Charles I. It has been asserted that the same description of dog was a favorite in the time of Henry VIII, and it was much esteemed by Elizabeth, and that the small 'dog' which was found under the clothes of Mary Queen of Scots after her execution was of this breed." – Mrs. Neville Lytton, *Toy Dogs and Their Ancestors*, London: Duckworth and Co., 1911. Pp. 24.

Whereupon Orlando, overcome with shyness, darted off and reached the banqueting-hall only just in time to sink upon his knees and, hanging his head in confusion, to offer a bowl of rose water to the great Queen herself. Such was his shyness that he saw no more of her than her ringed hand in water; but it was enough. It was a memorable hand; a thin hand with long fingers always curling as if round an orb or sceptre; a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand; a commanding hand; a hand that had only to raise itself for a head to fall; a hand, he guessed, attached to an old body that smelt like a cupboard in which furs are kept in camphor.<sup>172</sup>

This passage frames the binaries between object and subject, animal and master, and the ontology of the anthropomorphic machine. The “sickly hand” of imperial domination is bringing her subject to heel. The State body is literally perfumed and adorned by animal corpses; the cabineted fur is an exhumed ornament of the necropolis, a British subject embalmed by camphor.<sup>173</sup> Although Orlando is already dog-like before he is introduced to the Queen, there is a clear moment where the yoke of obedience and subjugation is forged—the moment where Orlando becomes a biopolitical animal, and formally a subject of State. The Queen treats Orlando as if he were a dog, calling out to him, “[h]ere,” referring to him as an “innocent” and then proceeds to pet him with her eyes. Elizabeth then plucks a ring from her finger and “fitted it to his,” and “next hung about him chains,”<sup>174</sup> thus fitting him into a collar and leash. Thereafter, the elderly Queen keeps Orlando in bed with her and “made him bury his face in that astonishing

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<sup>172</sup> *Orlando* 17.

<sup>173</sup> Camphor was commonly used in the UK as an ingredient in embalming fluids since the fifteenth century. McKone, “Embalming: A ‘Living’ Rite,” *American Chemical Society*. Dec. 2002: 33-34.

<sup>174</sup> *Orlando* 19.

composition.”<sup>175</sup> The “ring” is significant as it is an object that is revisited in the closing pages in the form of marriage. The materiality of the object shifts only slightly from the Elizabethan era into the Victorian age: the “ring” symbolizes affective control of a body as it is tethered by an autocratically imposed system of breeding in one era, and bridled by bureaucratic heteronormative coupling in the other. The ring’s purpose is to bind desire.

Orlando’s canine animality is actualized when whatever freedom he had from the “crabbed” hand of bureaucratic domination is overwhelmed by a complete appropriation of the senses, including sight, smell, and touch. His body is surveyed as one looks upon a pet, thus does a monarch survey her domain by objectifying Orlando as an animal subject: “Eyes, mouth, nose, breast, hips, hands— she ran them over; her lips twitched visibly as she looked; but when she saw his legs she laughed out loud. He was the very image of a noble gentleman.”<sup>176</sup> The Queen does not see Orlando as a person, but rather *like* an “image” of a human. The Queen is caressing Orlando as one does their furry companion, enjoying the possibility of his humanness, but never recognizing him as a fully arrived sovereign body. Therefore, the Queen appreciates the non-speaking adoration typical of a companion species relationship because it is unfathomable (in the world of the novel) for the nonhuman subordinated animal to challenge the position of the dominant species. But the scene is not merely an old Queen with a doting pet; it is a scene of active subjugation:

At the height of her triumph when the guns were booming at the Tower and the air was thick enough with gunpowder to make one sneeze and the huzzas of the people rang beneath the windows, she pulled him down among the cushions where her women had

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 19-20.

<sup>176</sup> *Orlando*, 19.

laid her (she was so worn and old) and made him bury his face in that astonishing composition— she had not changed her dress for a month— which smelt for all the world, he thought, recalling his boyish memory, like some old cabinet at home where his mother’s furs were stored. He rose, half suffocated from the embrace. “This,” she breathed, “is my victory!”<sup>177</sup>

The proximity and possibility for bodily violence deluges the senses with the “booming” and smell of gunpowder. Orlando is besieged with warnings of what the consequences are for refusing to completely submit to State authority: that is, he either surrenders “bare life,” or faces death. The corpses of the State’s animal subjects, embodied by the illusion of odorous fur, again smother him. The Queen’s “victory” is a crystallized future of the complete erasure of subjectivity in public spaces. Thus, it is obligatory to censor or camouflage “deviant” sexualities, considering that the theme of lesbian sexuality is veiled throughout the entire novel. For Woolf, noncompliance will be met with a literary death.<sup>178</sup> The threat of violence for Orlando’s lesbian sexuality is subsequently parodied when the old Queen sees Orlando kissing a girl through a reflection in a mirror:

[...] she saw in the mirror, which she kept for fear of spies always by her, through the door, which she kept for fear of murderers always open, a boy— could it be Orlando?— kissing a girl— who in the Devil’s name was the brazen hussy? Snatching at her golden-

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<sup>177</sup> *Orlando* 19-20.

<sup>178</sup> The obscenity charges waged against Radclyffe Hall’s 1928 lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness* are well documented. Virginia Woolf and other Bloomsbury Group members actively protested against the suppression of the novel. See more: Marcus, Jane. "Sapphistry: Narration as Lesbian Seduction in *A Room of One's Own*. *Virginia Woolf and the Language of Patriarchy*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. 163-87.

hilted sword she struck violently at the mirror. The glass crashed; people came running; she was lifted and set in her chair again; but she was stricken after that and groaned much, as her days wore to an end, of man's treachery.<sup>179</sup>

Woolf is disparaging homophobia as a conviction held by those who are afraid of becoming irrelevant, as is an aging monarch. The systemic oppression of sexuality indemnifies an ascendant position. The fetid and doddering Queen is emblematic of a dogma riding the cusp of extinction, and thus sustains itself on the annihilation and control of queer bodies. It is in the mirror's reflection where the Queen is able to see Orlando's queer animality. Affecting violence on Orlando through the mirror posits sexuality as an impression of the body, and it is castigated through cutting genuflection—much like rhetorical homophobia is recited between people. However, by breaking the glass, Orlando's lesbian desire is freed from its mounted frame and thereafter he does “as nature bade him.”<sup>180</sup>

Naturally, it is the feminine figure that drives Orlando's passion throughout the novel, and as such, is ardently attracted to another who is ostensibly cross-dressing. Fashioned as a Muscovite Princess, Sasha enters the novel among the “train of the Muscovite Ambassador,”<sup>181</sup> thus slipping into the parade neither without any formal introduction nor in any official capacity despite her noble moniker. At first glance it would seem that Woolf is sketching a dichotomy between the foreigner and the English body because Sasha's ability to converse in French and her finesse at mixing with the pedigreed crowd positions her as someone who is recognizably noble. However, her exotic Eastern heritage complicates her “noble virtue” when she is caught (possibly) fornicating in the “paws of [a] hairy sea brute”(38), in turn contending with the

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<sup>179</sup> *Orlando* 20.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>181</sup> *Orlando* 29.



dilemma of being “savage,” “barbaric,” or animal. Considering that Sasha virtually slips into an imperial convoy without ceremony, and is seated in the court between two noblemen who are unable to communicate in French—therefore, consigning Orlando and Sasha as the only two characters who are able to communicate effectively—both Orlando and Sasha have shifted out of the anthropoid realm as the two are allied by language in such a way that Donna Haraway suggests a human master must abstract in an “otherness-in-connection.”<sup>182</sup> Orlando’s initial reaction to Sasha is similar to how two strange dogs come into first contact, where “Orlando stared; trembled; turned hot; turned cold...As it was, he drew his lips up over his small white teeth; opened them perhaps half an inch as if to bite and shut them as if he had bitten” (28-29). Woolf is using dogs to censor lesbian desire, pushing the boundaries of animality beyond the two characters and shifted onto the genteel party as Sasha makes the odd query to Orlando, asking “Did the dogs eat at the same table with the men in England? Was that figure of fun at the end of the table with her hair rigged up like a Maypole (une grande perche mal fagotée)<sup>183</sup> really the Queen? And did the King always slobber like that?” (30). At play here is an artifice of Sasha’s dominance, an act that intimates a contact zone where national mores are reflected in the eye of the stranger. Then again, this move isolates Orlando and Sasha from the crowd, shifting canine animality onto the vacuous fanfare where the Queen’s chignon doubles as a top-knot on a toy dog, and the King slobbers as does a hound.

Although the character of Sasha has long been associated with Vita Sackville-West’s great love affair with a woman by the name of Violet Trefusis,<sup>184</sup> Sasha’s character could easily

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<sup>182</sup> Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto*. pp.45.

<sup>183</sup> “une grande perche mal fagotée” is translated as “great frumpy pole.” Translation, mine.

<sup>184</sup> Vita had written about her love affair with Violet Trefusis as a protest to Victorian sexual repression in her 1923 novel, *Challenge*; cross-dressing herself as Byronic protagonist, Julian, which was Vita’s nickname when she passed as a man, going so far as to rent a room with Violet under the guise as a married couple. It has been argued that Virginia Woolf created the Russian Princess in remembrance of Vita’s love for Violet. Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life*, pp.191.

be a stand-in for Virginia Woolf. In one of the twentieth century vignettes from the original holograph draft of *Orlando* that was subsequently deleted in its final publication, Orlando daydreams of Sasha while buying sheets from a shopkeeper, confessing that her passion was still alive: “yet she still desired her & cried for her & thought of her at night as one thinks of some dangerous white wolf very...seductive...”(H 264). Notwithstanding the obvious play on “wolf” for “Woolf,” Virginia had earlier crossed this species barrier in her correspondences with Vita, referring to the Woolfs as “wolves.”<sup>185</sup> Despite this obvious and perhaps easy association of Woolf with “wolf,” the allusion to the materiality of a white wolf is put forth in the earliest pages of the novel in Sasha’s physical description: “very slenderly fashioned, and dressed entirely in oyster-coloured velvet.”<sup>186</sup> Moreover, Sasha “bark[s] like a wolf” as she describes her wild Russian home.<sup>187</sup> A kinship tie can be traced further between the Muscovite Princess and Virginia Woolf in the conversations that transpire in post-coital moments in both the novel and in a letter written to Vita.

When Orlando discusses his noble relations, he subsequently embarrasses Sasha by contemplating her “uncultured” pedigree, envisioning “the savage ways of her people, for he had heard that the women in Muscovy wear beards and the men are covered with fur from the waist down; that both sexes are smeared with tallow to keep the cold out, tear meat with their fingers and live in huts.”<sup>188</sup> Orlando is acting the snob, but here too the already anthropomorphized body of Sasha is further pushed outside of the human boundary into the realm of animal as her response to Orlando’s assumptions are met with silence. Therefore, Orlando engages with the very networks of gendered and anthropomorphized power that s/he strains to escape. While this

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<sup>185</sup> *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, no. 1589.

<sup>186</sup> *Orlando*, 28.

<sup>187</sup> *Orlando*, 39.

<sup>188</sup> *Orlando* 35.

episode demonstrates the perniciousness of hegemonic male domination, there is an allusion to the class discrepancy between Vita and Virginia, when in a letter to Vita, Woolf concedes that “[Vita] has nothing, nor will ever have, in common with dog Grizzle who stand before me, raw, greasy, mudstained—.”<sup>189</sup> In life, class and biological sex separated Vita and Virginia from having a socially accepted partnership, but evidence of Virginia’s devotion to Vita is the romance of the wolf, as they were a species thought to have mated for life.<sup>190</sup>

Anxieties concerning the propagation of the aristocratic body, which depended on the coupling of two people of the same or similar classes, is expressed through Orlando’s romp with women of questionable if not unmistakable lack of breeding that comes to a head with the caricatured Spanish “gipsy” dancer, Rosina Pepita who comes from an unknown patrilineal descent.<sup>191</sup> But this anxiety is easily overshadowed when Orlando flips gender. The difference between male and female is not something that changes the nature of selfhood; an assertion endorsed by the “biographer,” who declares, “Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity.”<sup>192</sup> Rules politicizing sex based on class differences thus shift entirely onto the female body when Orlando changes gender, as she may pursue a relationship outside of her class as long as she is married. Maria DiBattista refers to *Orlando* as “Woolf’s gynomorphic revolution” that polemicizes the allegorical figures of “Female Ambition, Poetry, and Fame” as noble traits that are overshadowed by the idealizations of “Modesty, Chastity, and Purity.”<sup>193</sup> Orlando’s shift from

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<sup>189</sup> *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, no.1,607.

<sup>190</sup> Read 416.

<sup>191</sup> *Orlando* 98. “There were also various state papers and others of a private nature concerning the of his estates in England. But at length they came upon a document of far greater significance. It was nothing less, indeed, than a deed of marriage, drawn up, signed, and witnessed between his Lordship, Orlando, Knight of the Garter, etc. etc. etc., and Rosina Pepita, a dancer, father unknown, but reputed a gipsy, mother also unknown but reputed a seller of old iron in the marketplace over against the Galata Bridge. The secretaries looked at each other in dismay.”

<sup>192</sup> *Orlando* 102.

<sup>193</sup> DiBattista, Introduction, lxi.

male to female is marked by an immediate loss of a Dukedom as well as an Ambassadorship Extraordinaire of Constantinople. Orlando's womanhood is greeted by apparitions of Purity, Chastity, and Modesty, that is, all that polices the feminine sex was entirely absent from Orlando's life as a male. Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine's name has all of the makings of a noble body despite his lack of breeding as he is merely a soldier and sailor, and of a class much lower than that of Orlando, however anxiety over this coupling (and marriage) is markedly less. Thus, Woolf is highlighting the relaxed concerns over marrying within the same social class during the interwar era, demonstrating how the policing of classed bodies shifted onto women in the modern era in the form of strict gender performances and heteronormativity. Moreover, Woolf pressures notions of male sexuality versus lesbianism by putting forth the idea that male sexuality is generally more concerned with class, but female sexuality outside of a heterosexual marriage will not be tolerated.

The politicization of lesbian desire and the female body are carried through to the twentieth century, as the deaths of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria are conspicuously missing from the novel in view of Orlando's titles and associations with nobility. Notwithstanding the reality that dogs are not typically invited to funerals, Woolf is signaling that homophobic attitudes will endure through the twentieth century (or at least until October of Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-eight).<sup>194</sup> Inasmuch as Queen Elizabeth I is surrounded by gunpowder and cannon fire as she stifles Orlando under her blanket of power, this spectacle is reproduced alongside modern war technologies at the conclusion of the novel. Although the monarch in 1928 is George V, Orlando curtsies before a "dead Queen" who steps out of a

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<sup>194</sup> The date is the last line in *Orlando*. A month later in November 1928, Radcliffe Hall's novel will be tried and convicted of obscenity due to its lesbian themes. Concluding the novel as such lends to the idea that Woolf had little confidence in seeing a sexual liberation with the proximity of a "dead Queen" still deeply mired in the people's subconscious (*Orlando* 240).

chariot among kneeling “shadows.”<sup>195</sup> This uncanny haunting signals referentiality of a sustained traumatic memory—one that is based on sexual repression and violence—legitimized through Orlando’s reaction, which is to call Shelmerdine to appear by her side as a visibly heterosexual marriage is her only protection in the modern era:

“Here! Shel, here!” she cried, baring her breast to the moon (which now showed bright) so that her pearls glowed like the eggs of some vast moon-spider. The aeroplane rushed out of the clouds and stood over her head. It hovered above her. Her pearls burnt like a phosphorescent flare in the darkness.<sup>196</sup>

Orlando bares her breast as does a dog or wolf cry out to the moon, thus personifying the submissive animal in loyal recognition of her master. Her pearls appear seventeen times throughout the novel and are always associated with noble femininity. Conjointly, the Archduke Harry refers to her as “the Pearl” and the “Perfection of her sex.”<sup>197</sup> In this postwar era scene however, Orlando’s pearls are both a distress signal as well as a target; a light in a darkened sky that draws the deadly eye of hegemonic violence.

The body of Orlando is a composite of the human psyche that battles between its natural drive of desire and the higher call of moral authority—moral authority that was no longer coded as organic and originating from the body, but rather artificially categorized and manipulated by a sovereign influence. The character of Orlando is always inherently the same person despite his start as a man and subsequent transition to female. Moreover, *Orlando* is an indictment to a society that upholds the severe rules governing sexuality and gender, as the monarch who

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<sup>195</sup> *Orlando* 240.

<sup>196</sup> *Orlando* 242.

<sup>197</sup> *Orlando* 132.

instituted them was a cross-dresser herself: taking the helm of what was left of the monarch's rule first through her husband, and then as herself. Woolf indicts Victoria and the people who held onto the remnants of an ideology she held dear when Orlando cuts to the meat of the era:

For it has to be remembered that crime and poverty had none of the attraction for the Elizabethans that they have for us. They had none of our modern shame of book learning; none of our belief that to be born the son of a butcher is a blessing and to be unable to read a virtue; no fancy that we call "life" and "reality" are somehow connected with ignorance and brutality; not, indeed, any equivalent for these two words at all (*Orlando*, 23).

It is here that Woolf condemns the Victorian mindset that has foregone any interest in the sciences. Without reading the myriad of articles and journal entries that were produced in monumental numbers in the early twentieth century, the surface language does appear to support the taxonomy of bodies based on class and gender. However, underneath the language of the naturalists is evidence that evolution cares not a whim for majesty and wedding rings, the body is merely a disordered collaboration over time and space. In using the avatar of the pedigreed dog or the mongrel cur, Woolf has managed to isolate the foremost complication of aristocratic blood: that it is merely an illusion.

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### Publication

“Undressing Woolf’s *Orlando*: The Biopolitics of Empire When Dogs Cannot Speak”  
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eds. Jaime Harker and Julie Enzer (forthcoming 2017).

### Presentations

“Her Poor Dog Was Howling: Animacies and Pedigree in *Mrs. Dalloway*.” The Space  
Between: Literature and Culture, 1914-1945. Montreal, Quebec. June 2-4, 2016.

“Biopolitics, Animality, and Queer Affect in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.” Sarah Isom  
Gender Conference. Oxford, MS. March 2016.

“Suffering *Jouissance*: Reaching the Edge of Eroticism in Lars Von Trier’s,  
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“Futurisma: The Kismet Chronicles.” Sarah Isom Gender Conference. Oxford, MS. 25  
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“Killer Queen: Dirty Saints and Divine Hustlers in Tennessee Williams’s, *One Arm and  
Other Stories*.” Southern Writers/ Southern Writing (SWSW). Oxford, MS. 19 July 2014.

“And Then He Was a She: A Critical Analysis of Eudora Welty’s ‘The Purple Hat’.”  
American Literature Association. Washington D. C. 24 May 2014.

## Roundtables

Teaching as a Graduate Student: Southern Writers/Southern Writing (SWSW), University of Mississippi, 2014.

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Writing 102: Literature (first-year students, instructor of record)

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## Service to the Profession

Lifestyle contributor at the Daily Mississippian: a student newspaper for the University of Mississippi, 2015-2016 (published anonymously due to sensitive content).

VIDA: Women in the Literary Arts. Count Intern (2013-2014), and Count Coordinator (2014-2015).

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## University Service

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